

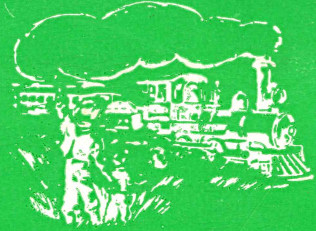
**SECOND EDITION**

# Farewell

# to the

# Fairlie-Flyer

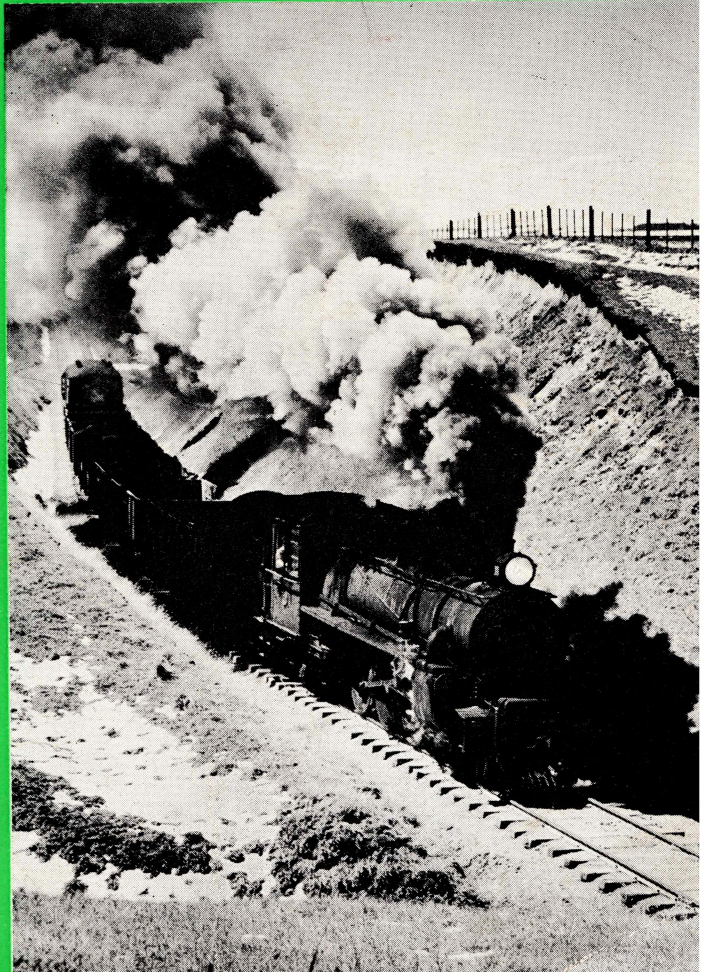
*I hope you enjoy  
reading this book Neil  
from Wattle*



**January 1884—March 1968**

**A  
record  
of 84 years  
Service**

**50 cents**



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MARCH 2, 1968.

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OUR AIM: *To establish a Memorial to the 'Fairlie Flyer'*

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# Introduction

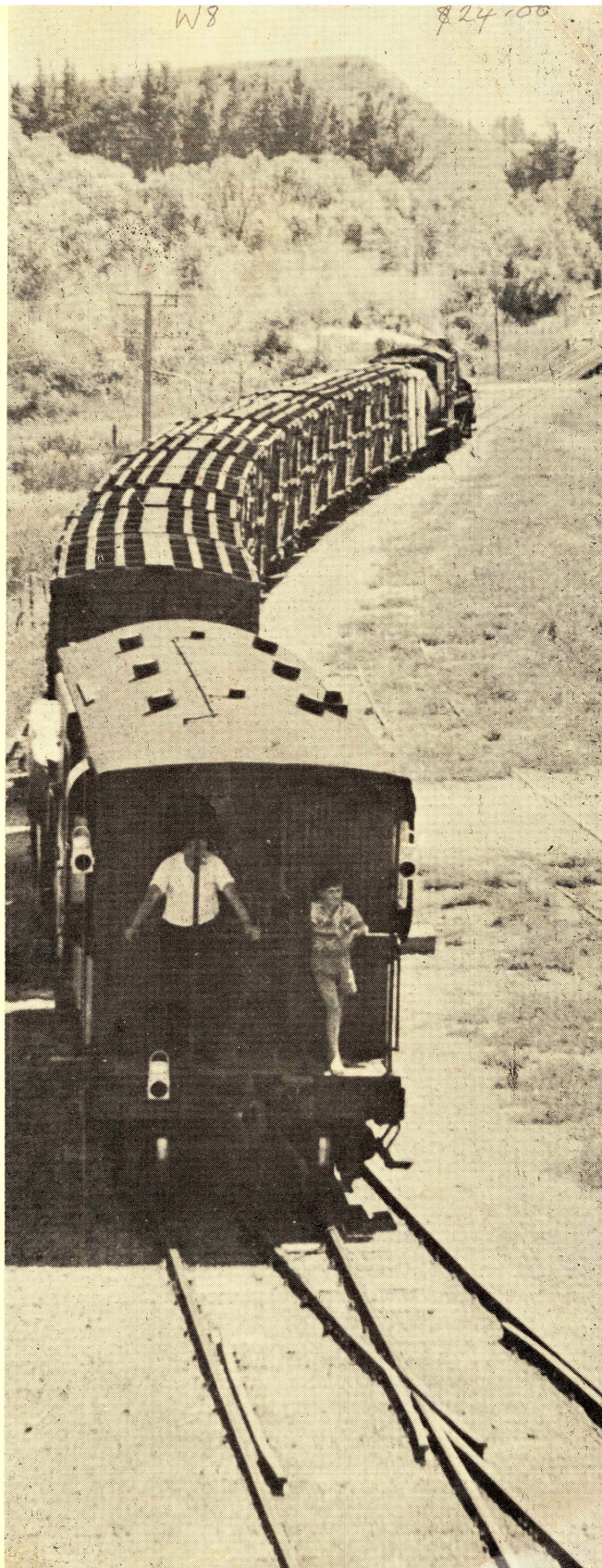
THE FAIRLIE FLYER was the name the 'locals' gave to a simple branch-line railway linking a series of country towns with the coastal city of Timaru. Within this book you will read the history, legends and local stories of this railway. The people who worked and travelled on it, and the part it played in the lives of the numerous rural communities it served so well.

'Farewell to the Fairlie Flyer' was first published for the commemorative run of the train on March 2, 1968. This revised second edition has been produced by public demand, with the main intention of preserving for all time another part of our districts history.

The fate of this 36-mile branch-line is still uncertain, but one thing is sure — if the Fairlie Railway was to continue for another generation, those colourful adventurous days of the 'Flyer' would never return again. It is those times we are proud to record within these pages.

W. H. TIMMINGS,  
*Publications Section*  
Fairlie Flyer Committee

The Flyer leaves Albury  
for Fairlie — 1968.





## SIGNS OF THE TIMES

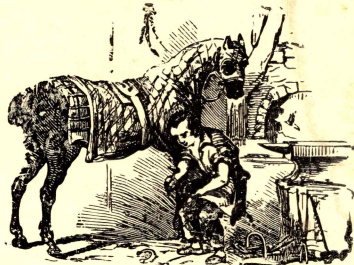


The expanding business section of Fairlie, early 1900s. (Note the gas lamp and Railway 'Stop' sign.)

The opening of the railway to 'Fairlie Creek' brought a new era of prosperity to the little town — and advertisements like these appeared in the early Timaru Herald's . . .

— GOOD NEWS —  
— GOOD NEWS —  
**ADVANCE  
FAIRLIE CREEK**

In future I purpose Reducing my Shoeing Prices, in consequence of the Railway extension enabling me to get material cheaper, so as to give Farmers and Agriculturists etc., the benefit.



**SHOEING — 6s, 7s, and 8s**  
General Jobbing in Proportion.  
Good care and careful workman.

**HUBERT WELSH  
HUBERT WELSH**

19/4/1884

**WILLIAM HUGHES**

(Late of Saltwater Creek)

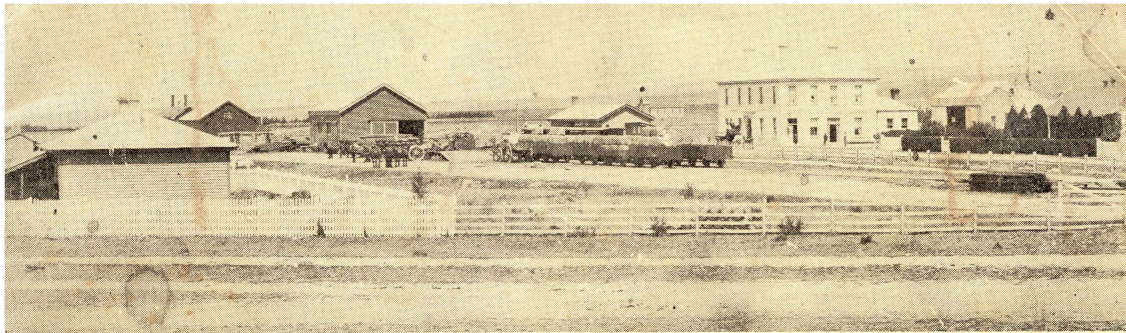
**GENERAL WHEELWRIGHT  
GENERAL WHEELWRIGHT  
AND COACHBUILDER  
AND COACHBUILDER**



Begs to announce to the inhabitants of the Mackenzie Country and Fairlie Creek that he has started business in those promises adjoining Mr H. Welsh's smithy and is prepared to Make and Repair all kinds of Carriages, Carts, Gates, Hurdles, and the woodwork of Implements etc., connected with Agricultural Pursuits, at Timaru prices.

**ESTIMATES GIVEN**





The railhead at Fairlie Creek, late 1880s.

## Opening of the Railway to Fairlie Creek

*The following account of the first excursion train appeared in the Timaru Herald of 31/1/1884.*

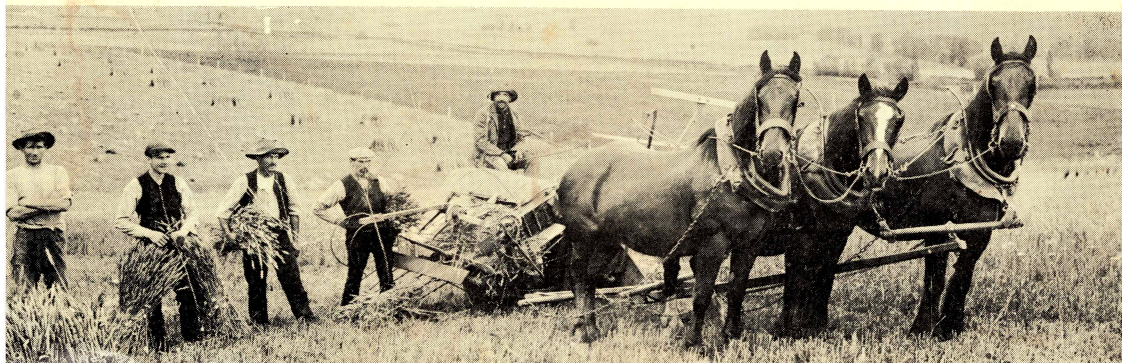
‘THE EXTENSION of the Albury branch railway from Albury to Fairlie Creek was opened for general traffic on Monday last, and this event was celebrated yesterday by the running of an excursion train from Timaru to the new terminus of the line. The importance to Timaru of increased facilities of communication with the interior was practically acknowledged by the townspeople, a requisition being handed to the Mayor asking him to proclaim a public holiday in Timaru, in order to allow business people and others to honour the occasion by joining in the excursion. The proclamation was made, and the holiday was well kept, nearly all the shops being closed. Special arrangements were made by the railway authorities for the excursion, a number of carriages being brought down from Christchurch on Tuesday night. Yesterday morning a train was made up consisting of fourteen carriages and brake van and two engines, — An American, the ‘Washington’ and one of the F class — and, seeing the numbers of people who were crowding the platform as the hour of starting drew nigh, a couple more carriages were put on, with the view of accommodating comfortably all who might join the train at Pleasant Point and Albury, as well as those booking at Timaru. Fewer people joined at those places than was expected, however, and the long train was by no means full, the total number of passengers disembarking at Fairlie Creek being estimated at about 600, — a nice little crowd, however, to turn loose in that unsophisticated little country township. The previous night had been wet, and the morning was dull, and very many who went only made up their minds at the last moment, on seeing that the sky was gradually getting brighter, and there seemed to be a good prospect of a fine day after all, otherwise the number of holiday makers would probably have been considerably larger. As it turned out, a finer day could not have been desired, except that a clearer sky would have permitted the mountains surrounding Fairlie Creek to be seen to better advantage. Mr F. Back, District Traffic Manager; Mr A. Smith, Superintendent of the Locomotive Department; Mr J. Jones, Stationmaster at Timaru; and Mr Dickenson, Locomotive Foreman, accompanied the train, and among the



excursionists were the Mayor of Timaru, Mr Sutter, M.H.R. for Gladstone, a large number of business men of Timaru, and a good many 'old identities' who had been familiar with Fairlie Creek in the old days, and desired a pleasant 'shock' from seeing the iron horse careering over ground where they had been accustomed to canter their horses of bone and sinew, without the thought of railways or excursion trains.

The train started punctually at the time appointed, and as the long string of carriages wound around the curves near town, allowing its length to be seen by the passengers, many were the jokes made about its 'astonishing the natives.' The two engines labored heavily in taking the train, with cold and still wheels, through the cuttings round the Bay, belching forth steam and dust and ashes like miniature Krakatoas, and if any unusual degree of redness is noticed in the sunset skies of the next few days, it may be attributed by anyone who pleases to this outburst. The outward journey was not very eventful. The only stations called at were Pleasant Point and Albury. At the former about 100 persons joined the train, and a good many more, including a host of cheering and hat-and-handkerchief-waving, school children were assembled to see the train pass. As a matter of course, no such train having passed up the line before, every resident along the line came out to see it pass, both going out and returning. At Albury about a score of adults, and the school children in a body, were added to the load, and the place was left apparently deserted, and most disconsolate looking. The scenery along the route presents little that is very remarkable, but plenty that is interesting enough. A mist obscured the distant hills, compelling a closer attention to the nearer features of the country passed through. As far as the Cave there were crops of grain to see, whitening to the harvest, and plump cattle and sheep happy among plentiful feed, and cottages and homesteads scattered among the paddocks, looking very calm and peaceful in contrast with the hurry and rattle of the train. At the Cave the cave was looked for, and its vicinity declared to be the place for a picnic ramble. The Tengawai River here runs near the line, and it was seen to be much discoloured, though not in high flood, indicating that a good deal of rain had fallen among the hills during the night. The cave on the right hand side has its opposite on the other side, in the shape of a prominent block of limestone which withstood the action of the destructive forces — glaciers, probably — which carried away its former neighbours. Seen from this side

'... as far as Cave there were crops of grain to see, whitening to the harvest.'





the Cave Station this rock had a remarkable resemblance to a dog's head, very much in repose, a very disconsolate dog, with very tearful eyes. (Has this observation ever been made before?) For several miles beyond the Cave, nearly all the way to Fairlie Creek in fact, the line runs along a narrow valley. The country to the left is monotonous and not at all interesting from a scenic point of view. On the right, however, rises the steep, slip-scarred western face of The Brothers, its general brown tints relieved by many strips and patches of green scrub in its narrow gullies, by the black or yellow strips of water channels running straight from top to bottom, and here and there by a silver thread of water trickling over a rocky edge. Half way from Albury to Fairlie Creek the line enters Mr Gillingham's downs through which it passes a series of heavy cuttings, which gave the excursionists glimpses of the 'interior', and showed that Mr Gillingham's land has a depth of subsoil he will never plough to the bottom of. The new station of Cricklewood and Winscombe, one at each end of the series of cuttings, were passed at full speed. Each station consists of a siding and a shingle platform, a small portion of the latter covered over by a leanto shed — forming a 'sixth class', not a first class station. The cuttings are of considerable depth, and to save the expense of making them still deeper, the line rises to them on each side by very heavy grades. Mounting the upgrade made the engines puff; descending the downgrade, which is continued over a long embankment across Coal Gulley, steam was shut off, and gravity took the train down flying, at a very cheap rate. In one of the hollows

F25 (Old Canterbury Numbering) bedecked with flags as it is being prepared to haul the first train from Pleasant Point to Albury — January, 1877.

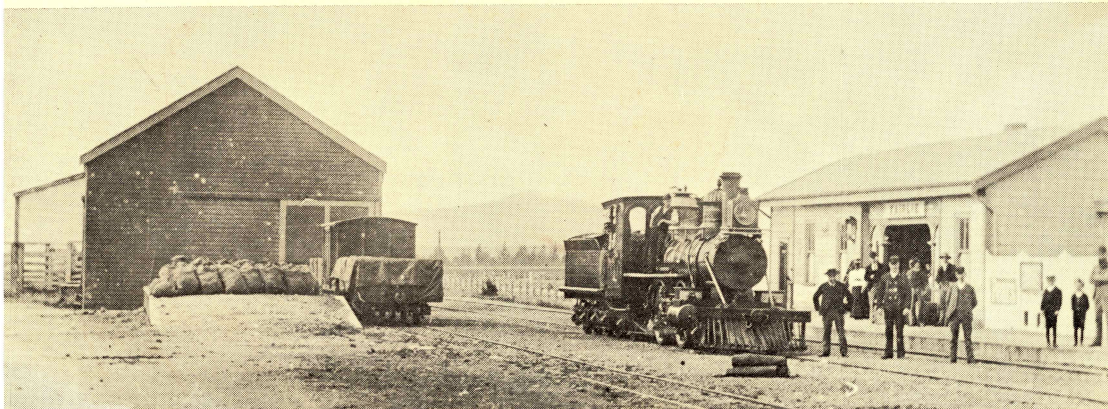




between the cuttings the 'Fairlie Creek coal mine' was passed. The mouth of the pit or drive was within a few yards of the line. There was no sign of activity in the coal trade. Possibly the miners were on strike. Possibly there is no demand for the coal. It contains too much sulphur; 'stinks like Hades' say they who have tried it. While crossing Coal Gulley, the Fairlie Creek district comes into view, a triangular plain surrounded by mountains or high downs backed by mountains. Right ahead lay the Two Thumb range, its upper half unfortunately hidden by clouds; to the left the western continuation of the Hunter Range; and to the right, close at hand, the western end of the Brothers, left by the really stupendous and almost impassible gorge through which the river Opihi finds its way out of this deep basin, and further on, the rugged western summit of Mount Four Peaks. The Ashwick Flat, on which the outlines of a few good sized farms were to be made, backed by a long sloping stretch of tussock, lay in the middle distance, and in the foreground, divided from the last by the now muddy stream of the Opihi, Mr Gillingham's and Mr McLean's well-grassed paddocks. A little more expenditure of steam, and the houses of Fairlie Creek appeared in sight; still a little more and the excursionists were jumping from the train at the station, and reading from a conspicuous placard, 'Welcome, Timaru. Better late than never.'

On arriving at the terminus, each one of us was left to his own devices. Three or four coaches were in readiness to convey to Burkes Pass those who desired to make the trip. These appeared at first to have some difficulty in obtaining patronage, but eventually six or seven coach and express loads set out for that township. About a dozen persons procured vehicles and visited the gorge; the rest contented themselves with strolling about the township and in the river bed. Where the fresh in the river obliged them to observe that the Upper Opihi resembles other Canterbury rivers in having a decided aversion to bridges. Mr J. G. Allen's new mill came in for a good share of attention, a large number taking advantage of the permission given to inspect it. Unfortunately it could not be sung 'Merrily goes the mill wheel,' because the stock of grain was exhausted, and it does not pay to grind mill stones for exhibition or any other purpose. Soon after the party arrived the sun aided for a time by a light breeze from the west, succeeded in dissipating to a considerable extent the clouds which had hidden the mountain tops and during the afternoon the Two Thumb range looked very beautiful, with its big brown summit, flecked and checkered with brilliant patches of

A class 'K' locomotive at Fairlie Station late 1890s.





snow, appearing above the thin cloud which wreathed the range, the Mount Four Peaks stood out clear and bold, but snowless and less richly coloured. The sky overhead became quite clear and after three o'clock the sun shone very powerfully, making the air rather uncomfortably warm. The visitors were heartily congratulated by the residents on being favoured with such agreeable weather. and the visitors as heartily returned the compliment.

A large marquee had been erected near Mr Winter's Hotel and various conjectures were hazarded as to its purpose, 'luncheon booth' being the most favoured. About half an hour after the arrival of the train this is thrown open, and its purpose was the more surely guessed. Along the middle was erected a table on which were displayed bottles of 'fizz', provided by the residents and champagne glasses. A general move was made towards the marquee, the crowd finding more room outside than in, notwithstanding that a good many persons had by this time strayed away. The only formal ceremony of the day being commenced.

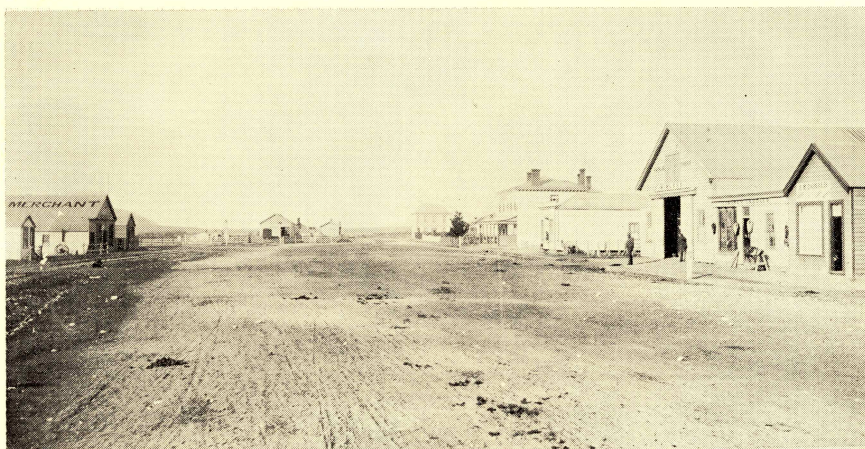
Mr F. W. Marchant, Engineer and Clerk to the Mackenzie County Council within whose territory Fairlie Creek lies, addressed the visitors. He had been requested by the inhabitants to bid them welcome to Fairlie Creek, and he did so with great pleasure. He was very glad indeed that the sun had conceeded to shine on their visit. The Fairlie Creek line, if he may take a liberty with a quotation, has been a case of 'linked ironwork long drawn out.' It was now practically finished, however, and he trusted that it would be of great service both to the district and to Timaru. He ventured to predict that the district opened up by the extension of the line had a great future before it, and that with the important means of communication now provided, time alone was needed to render it a source of great commercial benefit to the town and port of Timaru. He had much pleasure, therefore, in bidding a hearty welcome to His Worship the Mayor of Timaru, to Mr Sutter, Member for Gladstone, and to the other visitors from Timaru.

Mr J. Jackson, Mayor of Timaru, returned thanks for the welcome given them. He quite appreciated the remark of Mr Marchant that the line would be of great benefit to Timaru, for if it were not for the trade of the country districts, he for one would not be able to live. The town, he had always felt, was dependent on the country, it was through the prosperity of the country people that the townspeople must look for theirs.

He believed with Mr Marchant that this district had a great future before it, and the opening of the railway would bring that future nearer.

Mr J. H. Sutter, M.H.R. for the district, also returned thanks for the welcome accorded them. They could hardly appreciate the trouble he had had to get the station placed where it was, and possibly some ill feeling had been aroused in the mind of the beaten party. He hoped and believed, however, that it would soon be forgotten, and it would come to be universally acknowledged that the line was finished so far, he thought that it would prove sufficient, and further extensions be unnecessary for some some years to come.

Mr F. Back, district Traffic Manager, proposed 'success to the Fairlie Creek District'. In doing so he said that if the country were likened to the backbone of the town, the railway might safely be likened to its spinal marrow. Many years ago he had been a cadet in this district, and at that time any person who should have ventured to say that within his lifetime there would be a railway up to Fairlie Creek would have been looked upon



Fairlie Creek, 1889 — The railway yards and goodshed are seen towards the centre.

as neither more nor less than a madman; yet a railway to Fairlie Creek was now an accomplished fact. Mr Back remarked that he looked upon this district and the Mackenzie country as the Sanatorium of Canterbury and stated that he was in communication with the Government on the subject of making arrangements for the issue of excursion tickets through by train and coach to Lake Tekapo at a low price. If that could be arranged he anticipated it would result in an increase in railway traffic, and in benefit to the people, they would thus be enabled to avail themselves of the re-invigorating atmosphere of the mountains amid grand and beautiful scenery. He begged to propose 'success to the Fairlie District'.

The toast was warmly received, and three hearty cheers given after which the champagne was liberally circulated, and the formal proceedings terminated.

Mention must not be neglected of the preparations made by Mr Winter, of the Fairlie Creek Hotel, to meet the demands for refreshments for so large an influx of visitors. On the way up it was remarked that he could not have expected so many, and would be ill-prepared. Suffice it to say that the table in his dining room was laid and relaid time after time, and the last man got a capital luncheon as well as the first, while ladies, of whom there was a good proportion among the excursionists, were well attended to and supplied with a cup of good tea in a separate room. A good many small parties took 'hampers' with them, and lunches on the grass beside one or other of the many little streams near the township, and others were invited guests of neighbouring settlers.

As the time fixed for the return drew nigh, the coaches returned from Burke's Pass, the strollers collected near the station, and by the time appointed 5.20 p.m. all had taken their seats on the train without confusion or trouble. The platform was crowded with residents of the township and neighborhood, and as the train moved off hearty cheers were given on both sides. The return journey was made without mishap and in good time, scarcely two hours being consumed. The very best of good humour had been shown all day, and all the visitors to Fairlie Creek appeared to have enjoyed their excursion immensely.



# PART OF OUR LIFE

## The Fairlie Flyer

*By William Vance*

THE BIG TEN-STOREYED building recently occupied by the Ministry of Works Department in Wellington is named the Vogel Building, after Sir Julius Vogel.

But what has the Fairlie branch railway got to do with Sir Julius Vogel. Well, he built it; at least he borrowed the money to build it. Part of the £10,000,000 he borrowed for public works was used to construct the Fairlie railway.

In 1874 the Pleasant Point station was built and in the following year the railway at Pleasant Point was opened. Two trains each way were run daily.

Enthusiasm for railway building continued so £60,000 was set aside by the Government for extending the line to Albury. Work on it was started on January 7, 1876, and was completed on October 21 of that year.

### WILLIAM GREEN

So far as I know, the only contemporary account of the trip by train to Albury was written by one William Green.

Green says: 'It was now 3.30 p.m. so returning to the Timaru railway station, we took our seats in the train for Albury. Our course was directly inland and for the first few miles we passed through a well-cultivated country, in which harvest operations were progressing favourably. Our pace was not very rapid owing to the fact that we were ascending a gentle gradient. As there were not more than half-a-dozen people in the train, which was the last for the day, there was no particular reason for hurry. It was a lovely balmy afternoon and nothing of fuss or excitement to detract from the pleasure of contemplating the peaceful scenes of farm life. As we approached Albury the line wound along in picturesque curves by the banks

Snow greets the 'flyer' at Fairlie — November 1967.





of a branch of the Opihi River; high downs of ancient moraine covered with native tussock grass and a few straggling cabbage trees confined its bed to a narrow valley.

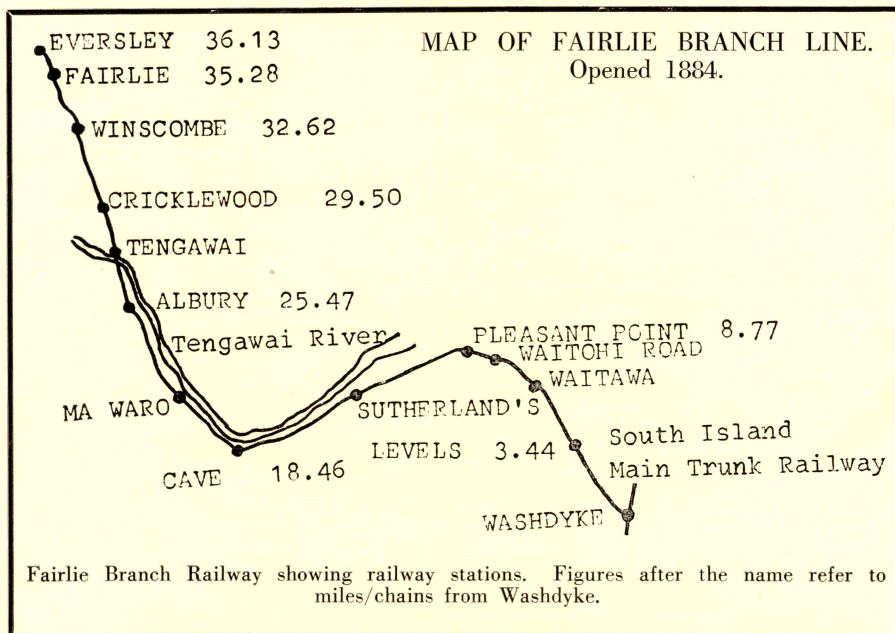
On the train coming to a stand we discovered we had done our thirty miles and were at Albury, the present terminus of the line. We quite expected to find it a township — at least a few shops, but nothing of the kind was visible. The train only stopped there because the line was finished no farther, and two hotels alone marked its existence amidst the rolling downs.

## COMPETITION

When Green came to Albury, the 10-year slump of the eighties had already begun. Soup kitchens had opened in Timaru and the Government had begun to cut down on public works spending. The construction of the line from Albury to Fairlie was begun on July 8, 1879, and unemployed labour was used. By August 22, 1883, the line had reached Winscombe, and the official opening of the completed line was celebrated by an excursion from Timaru to Fairlie Creek on January 30, 1884. The Fairlie Flyer, destined to serve the countryside for almost a century, was born. The construction cost was £142,000.

## TIME TABLE

Two trains — running similar to the Pleasant Point timetable — ran between Timaru and Fairlie. Travellers now had the choice of driving in a horse drawn trap or riding in a sheltered railway carriage. Proof of the popularity of the train is shown by the fact that, in 1908, 10,000 tickets were sold at Fairlie.





## ROMANCE

My own memories of the Fairlie Flyer go back to boyhood days, when there was always a bustle to catch the train to Timaru. There was never the need for that bustle because you had to shiver at the station for half-an-hour before the old Flyer came shrieking around the corner. Yet I did not mind the wait because there was always something interesting to look at. There was the queue of people waiting to get their tickets, the porter with his barrow-load of luggage, pushing his way along the crowded platform; the puffing and the shunting of the engine; and best of all the stationmaster running out to give the all-clear signal by waving his little green flag. How I would have liked to wave that flag! In the words of Rudyard Kipling, here was 'romance brought up in the 9.15.'

## CONVERSATION

The early carriages had two long seats running the length of each side with the passage-way down the centre. They were the longest, hardest, and most unforgiving horse-hair cushioned seats I have ever come across. The battered copper footwarmers seemed to make the feet colder.

But travel was a happy family occasion. Everyone knew everyone else and the hum of the general chatter was like the buzzing of a busy hive.

In such a way, the three hours passed quickly enough. But there was not always the talking. Mrs Cook of Fairlie told me that she liked travelling in the train as it gave her time to think. Many women, busy with the daily cares of house and farm, must have felt the same way.

Personally, I was content to just sit. Just sit and gaze out of the window at the sheep and cows, the ripening grain, the trees and the homes. There was always something to look at, even if only the comings and goings of the passengers.

Steam threshing mills like this were a familiar sight along the Fairlie Line in the early 1900s.



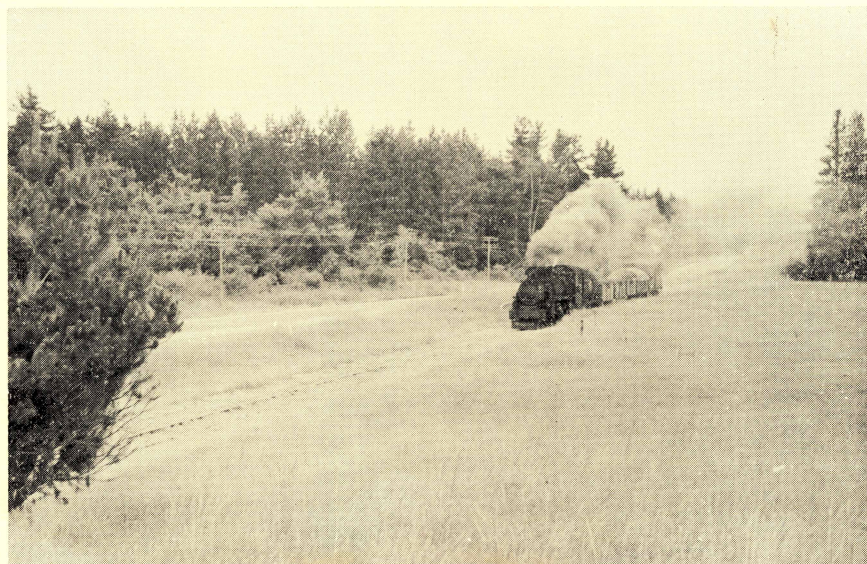




### UNDER THE MOUNTAINS TO THE MACKENZIE

The track to carry the railway to Burkes Pass was surveyed and the line built as far as Eversley. The surveyed route from the pass ran along the northern side of the present roadway as far as the long cutting. From there it was planned to cut a tunnel under the hills and bring the railway out onto the Mackenzie basin. But changes in Government policy brought a halt to this, and at Fairlie the steel path of the iron horse ended.

The return train from Fairlie passes the site of Winscombe Station — 1968.



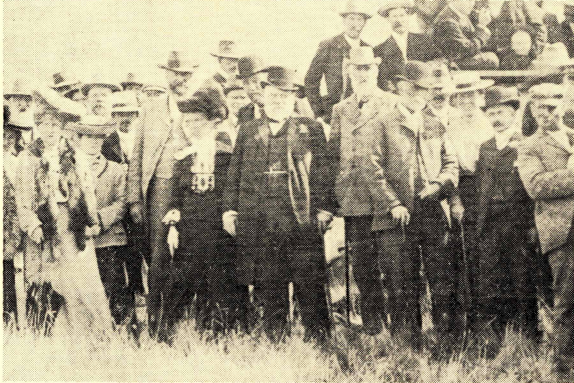


## PART OF OUR LIFE — *Continued.*

My children, in the twilight days of the Fairlie flyer, loved to travel by train. Mum would be sent home in the car alone, while the children, armed with tempting eats like hot pies, ice cream, and chocolates, felt like royalty in a carriage all to themselves. Every seat would be tried out, then came the pastime of turning the seat-backs. The entrance of Martin Fahey, the veteran guard, created a flurry of searching for mislaid tickets. A car ride could never be as exciting as this.

### KING DICK SEDDON

The Fairlie Flyer has seen many happy days, but the happiest and the grandest day of all was when the Premier of New Zealand, Richard John Seddon plus his entourage travelled to Albury in a special train. 'Gold'



King Dick and party at Mount Nessing.

had been discovered in the district, or at least thought to have been discovered, and dreams of Albury becoming a second Hokitika with a population of 40,000 and a hundred hotels filled the air.

Who could tell? 'King Dick Seddon', himself a former miner knew gold well and he came to see. The train drew up to the station, among a roar of welcoming cheers. Then came the banquet, and the diners were so many that the fruit-salad had to be made in a bath tub. A great procession followed Mr Seddon to the place where the gold had been discovered. There was a breathless hush as the Premier examined the claim then turned to announce his verdict. The dreams of Albury were shattered: 'It's fool's gold', he announced. The bright glittering mica that lay there had deceived many. However, the Albury folk accepted the Premier's verdict, and everyone enjoyed the historic outing.

### FAREWELL

And so we say farewell to our old friend the Fairlie Flyer. The motor car has brought about a transport revolution, but in the change, we have lost something. This train was a social centre for the whole district. Now it is gone.

Demolition gangs may one day take away the old familiar railway tracks but nothing can take from us the happy memories of riding in the Fairlie Flyer.

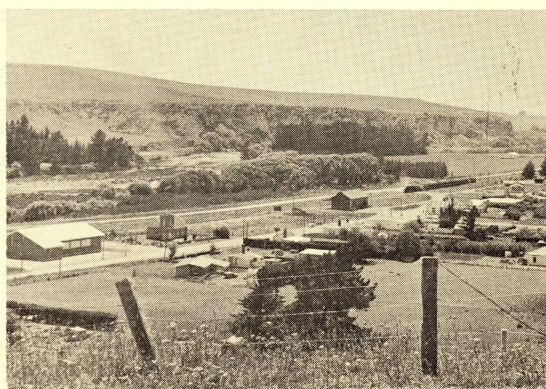


# Along the Fairlie Line



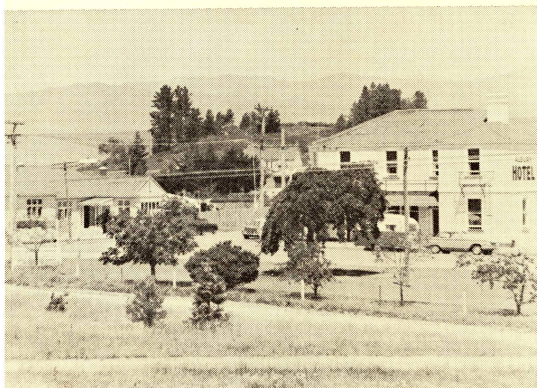
Shopping Centre, Pleasant Point — 1968.

**CAVE**—Known to tourists for the Pioneer Church of St. David. The railway reached here in 1877—today the settlement has one hotel, a store and modern hall.



The Flyer arrives at Cave, 1967.

Albury Township — 1968.



**ALBURY**—Popular in the winter for its ice skating. A small town with one hotel, garage, post office and a large school. The railway was completed to here in 1877.

Fairlie—Gateway to the Mackenzie — 1968.

**FAIRLIE**—Known once as 'Fairlie Creek'—the railway link with Timaru was opened in January, 1884. Today this town is the business and service centre for one of New Zealand's richest districts. 36 miles from Timaru.





# What They said at the Time

Newspaper reports of the closure of the Fairlie line.  
from 'The Timaru Herald'

WELLINGTON — July 27, 1967:

Half a dozen small branch lines are likely to be closed later in the year as a result of a full survey of uneconomic lines done for the Minister of Railways (Mr J. B. Gordon).

The axe is likely to fall hardest in Southland, South Otago and Canterbury areas where there are a number of lines carrying low tonnages — in some cases as little as 2000 net tons per route mile.

FAIRLIE — August 9, 1967:

Mr W. B. Trotter, speaking on behalf of the Fairlie Railway Line Retention Committee, said the farmers of the district were accused of not supporting the railway. 'How on earth can they?' said Mr Trotter, pointing out that the majority of the late grain grown in the district was consigned by boat to the North Island and there was no rail access to the wharves.

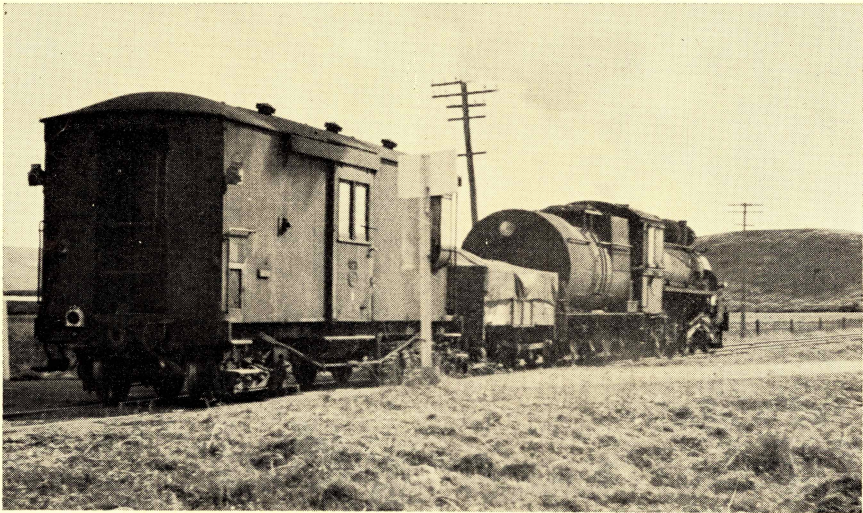
WELLINGTON — August 11, 1967:

The 35 mile Washdyke-Fairlie railway branch line is to be closed, the Minister of Railways (Mr J. B. Gordon) announced yesterday. The date of the closure would be announced shortly he said. The Fairlie line was losing 43,000 dollars a year.

The Fairlie Flyer crosses the Tengawai Bridge — 1967.







‘The Fairlie Line was losing \$43,000 a year.’

**FAIRLIE** — August 11, 1967:

‘A piece of arrogance’ was how Mr R. B. Shand, a member of the Fairlie Railway Line Retention Committee, described the decision by the Minister of Railways to close the Fairlie Branch railway.

The Member of Parliament for Ashburton, Mr R. L. G. Talbot, said the closure of the branch lines would be felt most by farmers who sell wheat and other cereals at free-on-rail prices. ‘I believe growers have a special case and a very strong argument on their side.’

Mr Talbot said he would make representations to the Ministers concerned.

**FAIRLIE** — August 12, 1967:

The Fairlie Railway Retention Committee would meet soon to consider making strong representations to the Minister of Railways, said the committee’s publicity officer, Mr W. B. Trotter yesterday. ‘We want to meet the Minister and discuss the matter in an effort to resolve it to the satisfaction of all concerned, but apparently he is not interested in what we might have to say’, — said Mr Trotter.

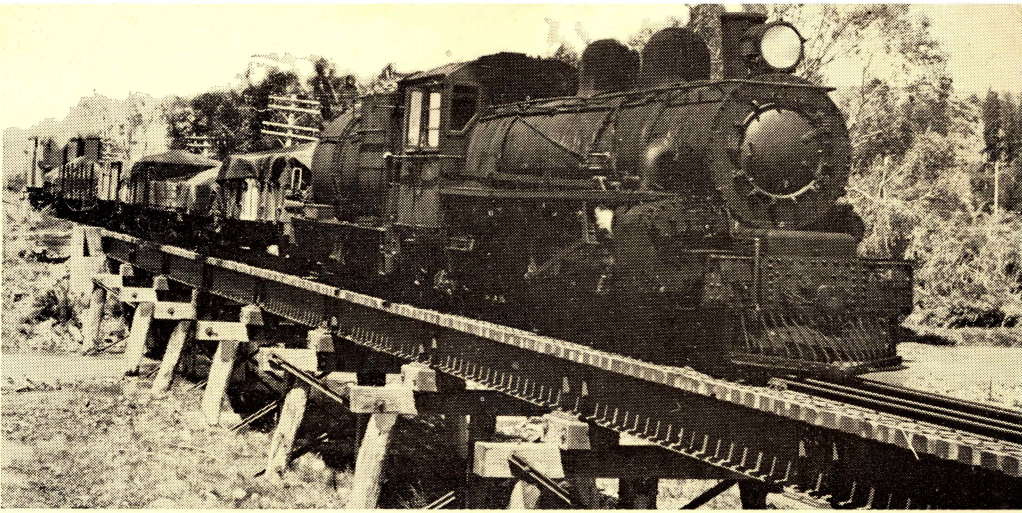
**WELLINGTON** — August 14, 1967:

Strongly criticising the Government’s decision to cut back on rail services, the Railway Tradesmen’s Association claimed today that the Railways were being ‘manipulated’ as part of the Governments over-all economic policies. The general secretary of the R.T.A., Mr A. Goldsmith said ‘For the price of one of our more expensive civil or military planes the railway could provide many improved services.’

**WELLINGTON** — August 19, 1967:

Suggestions in local newspaper reports that the Government’s decision to close the Fairlie branch railway had ‘abruptly ended negotiations’ between local interests and the Minister of Railways





Ab 754 crosses the Rocky Gully bridge on its thrice weekly run — 1968.

indicated a misunderstanding of the situation, the Minister of Railways said yesterday. Mr Gordon said that, notwithstanding this situation he was quite ready to consider any representations that might be made to him by the Fairlie Railway Retention Committee, or any other interested organisation in the district. But such representations would have to be made promptly as tonnage had suffered a further decline in recent months since his original indications of possible closure.

**TEKAPO** — August 21, 1967:

‘The Minister of Railways should be congratulated for having the courage to stand up to pressure groups’ Mr K. M. Wright told a meeting of the Mackenzie branch of Federated Farmers on Saturday. Mr Wright said it seemed a sorry state that runholders were being asked to prop up an uneconomic line.

A voice: ‘Well said.’

**ALBURY** — September 14, 1967:

At a meeting of the Albury-Cave branch of Federated Farmers it was decided to send the following remit to the South Canterbury executive ‘That South Canterbury Federated Farmers give full support to the Fairlie Branch Railway Retention Committee in its efforts to retain the branch line to Fairlie’. It was moved by Mr H. Squire and seconded by Mr R. McKenzie.

**FAIRLIE** — September 30, 1967:

A deputation from the Fairlie Branch Railway Retention Committee will wait on the Minister of Railways (Mr J. B. Gordon) on Tuesday to present the committee’s case of retaining the Timaru-Fairlie Branch line. The committee chairman Mr N. R. King said yesterday that the deputation would comprise Messrs W. B. Trotter, R. Shand, and himself.

**WELLINGTON** — October 4, 1967:

A sub-committee of Federated Farmers told the Minister of Transport (Mr J. B. Gordon) yesterday that the Fairlie railway branch line could be profitable. The chairman Mr N. R. King said after the 80-minute meeting, that the Minister had undertaken to investigate the case put forward by the delegation and would make a decision in due course.



WELLINGTON — October 18, 1967:

The Minister of Railways (Mr J. B. Gordon) said yesterday that the closing date of January 1, 1968 for the Fairlie railway branch line was 'certainly not irrevocable.' He said this after meeting the member of Parliament for Ashburton (Mr R. L. G. Talbot) who sought an assurance that the line would not be closed in the middle of the wheat season.

FAIRLIE — November 23, 1967:

The Minister of Railways has refused to reconsider his decision to close the Fairlie Branch Line, and he is to make a formal announcement soon concerning the date of closure. This information is contained in a personal letter from the Minister received by Mr W. B. Trotter a Fairlie farmer, and publicity officer to the Fairlie Railway Line Retention Committee. Commenting on the letter Mr Trotter said 'The decision is the direct result of Railways Department policy, under which small-minded people can see no railway in the South Island, except a line from Picton to Bluff.



' . . . small-minded people can see no railway in the South Island, except a line from Picton to Bluff.'

WELLINGTON — November 24, 1967:

The 35 mile Fairlie railway branch line from Washdyke will be closed to traffic from March 1, 1968. This date was confirmed yesterday by the Minister of Railways, who said that full and sympathetic consideration had been given to several submissions received since the Governments intention to close the line was



announced in August. 'I regret however' said the Minister 'that I have been unable to find any sound reason for changing the previous decision. Tonnage carried had been declining steadily for several years as a result of changing transport patterns.

**FAIRLIE** — November 25, 1967:

The Fairlie Retention Committee is preparing to 'fight a Last ditch stand' on the Government announced decision to close the Washdyke-Fairlie line at the end of February. 'The committee is keenly disappointed at the decision, it has lost faith in the Minister of Railways because he appears to have listened to our representations, tongue in cheek, and has failed to answer our submissions in a direct and satisfactory manner.

**FAIRLIE** — November 27, 1967:

The only increases likely on road transport charges from Fairlie to Timaru after the closing of the Fairlie branch railway are those granted by the Transport Department or New Zealand Railways through rising costs, a Fairlie carrier Mr D. Barwood said on Saturday. 'We have never tried to persuade anyone to use road against rail, but as many farmers have said it is better to have carriers doing well than to have a bankrupt rail and struggling carrier to depend on.'

**WELLINGTON** — November 29, 1967:

The Minister of Railways commenting yesterday on remarks by Mr W. B. Trotter of the Fairlie Railway Retention Committee, published in the 'Timaru Herald' on Thursday November 23, said — 'I can only repeat that there is no evidence that an adequate volume of traffic could be diverted back to Fairlie branch railway to make its retention an economic proposition.

**TIMARU** — December 4, 1967:

Telegram from Fairlie Flyer Committee to Minister — 'Committee seek approval for excursion train to run Timaru-Fairlie and return Saturday March 2'

**WELLINGTON** — December 7, 1967:

Telegram from Minister — 'Fairlie Line officially closes February 29 Stop Excursion would have to be run before that date'

**TIMARU** — December 8, 1967:

Telegram to Minister — Committee seeks reconsideration March 2 for special chartered train Timaru-Fairlie and return . . . Your reconsideration requested in time to advise public meeting this evening'

**WELLINGTON** — December 8, 1967:

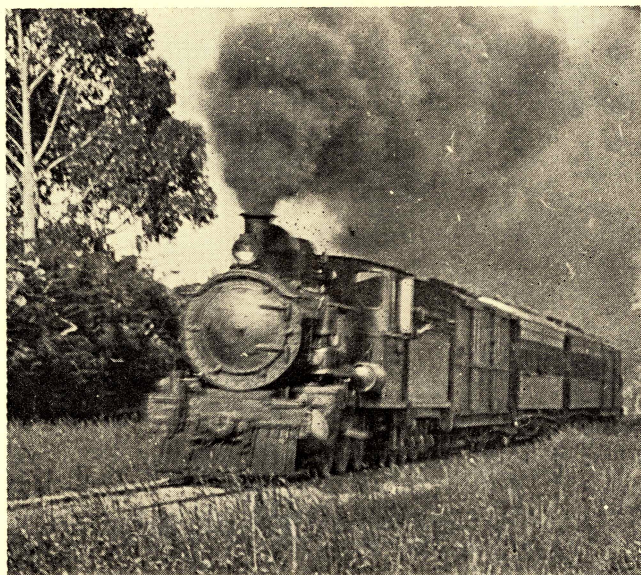
Telegram from Minister — 'Am prepared to extend rail closing Fairlie Line to March Second to allow a joint special chartered train to run to Fairlie Stop Please make arrangements with District Traffic Manager Regards, J. B. Gordon, Minister of Railways'

**WELLINGTON** — February 9, 1968:

The Railways Department would be prepared to sell the Fairlie branch railway line at scrap value to any local company that might be formed for the purpose of maintaining and operating it, the



## THE CHANGING TIMES



The Fairlie Flyer leaves Pleasant Point  
hauled by a class 'U' locomotive, 1928.



The road and the railway meet at Fairlie — Ab 718  
shunting in the main street — February, 1968.



## WHAT THEY SAID AT THE TIME — *Continued.*

Minister of Railways (Mr J. B. Gordon) said yesterday. But it would be necessary for such a company to have proper legal authority to run a railway.

Mr Gordon was commenting on further remarks by Mr W. Trotter, publicity officer for the Fairlie Railway Retention Committee.

‘Any company formed to take over the Fairlie branch line,’ the Minister said, ‘would require to have its own locomotives and, of course, hire charges would apply to N.Z.R. wagons during such time as they were on the property of the private railway as is normal with such type of operation.’

Mr Gordon added that, if the local people were satisfied they could make a go of it, they were welcome to form a company to purchase the railway. On all the figures available to him, however, he could not see that there was sufficient traffic available in the district to produce enough revenue to cover maintenance, renewal and operating costs.

### TIMARU — February 13, 1968:

The Automobile Association has decided to investigate suggestions that the route of the Fairlie railway line could be used in the future as the line of a new road to the Mackenzie country. If such a move was begun the association would support it, it was decided.

### WELLINGTON — February 23, 1968:

The Railways Department will make available to the Fairlie Flyer Committee an Ab locomotive for static display at a cost to the committee of \$600. This was announced yesterday by the Minister of Railways (Mr. J. B. Gordon).

‘This is concessional price. The scrap value of the locomotive is more than \$800 and the committee is thus getting a gift of \$200,’ Mr. Gordon said. ‘This is because of the widespread interest in retaining the Fairlie line and in acknowledgement of the part played by locomotives of this type in developing the area.’

The locomotive is Ab.699, which is at present at Christchurch. The committee proposes to present it to the residents of the Mackenzie Country, and until a permanent site can be arranged, it will be stored at the railway yards at Fairlie.

Commenting on the Minister’s statement a spokesman for the committee said: ‘The committee greatly appreciates the action of the Minister in showing this interest in our venture in placing a permanent memorial to the Fairlie Flyer.’

The spokesman said that the matter was under consideration at present and they were awaiting further details from the Minister. A survey of the site has already been made and the committee is now investigating ways of raising funds to purchase the locomotive.

### PLEASANT POINT — February 28, 1968:

The Fairlie Flyer memorial will be sighted in Pleasant Point, this was the outcome of a meeting between the Fairlie Flyer Committee and the Pleasant Point Businessmens Association last night. On behalf of the Fairlie Flyer Committee Messrs W. H.



Timmings and S. R. Bennett explained to the meeting that it was originally proposed to site the engine at Fairlie, but the people there had shown no interest in the project and it was then felt that Pleasant Point should be given the opportunity.

The Businessmens Association under their chairman Mr. J. J. Dockerty unanimously agreed that the engine should be bought and sited or housed at Pleasant Point and they decided to raise some of the necessary finance.

**FAIRLIE** — February 29, 1968:

**INJUNCTION SOUGHT TO STOP MINISTER FROM CLOSING THE LINE.** Legal proceedings have been started by the Fairlie Railway Retention Committee to restrain the Minister of Railways (Mr. J. B. Gordon) from closing down the Washdyke-Fairlie line from March 2. In the form of a writ of summons and notice of motion, the proceedings are believed to be unprecedented in the history of the New Zealand Railways.

**FAIRLIE** — February 29, 1968:

The foresight and initiative shown by the Pleasant Point community in agreeing to accept a locomotive as a memorial to the Washdyke - Fairlie branch Railway line was praised by the Chairman of the Fairlie section of the Fairlie Flyer Committee (Mr. A. Barwood) yesterday.

Mr. Barwood said that before arranging a site it was decided to test the public attitude to the memorial at Fairlie and the result was that only one person in ten showed an interest in the project.

**WHANGAREI** — March 1, 1968:

The Minister of Railways (Mr. J. B. Gordon) announced at a Civic reception in Dargaville last night that the Crown Law Office had accepted on his behalf an injunction to stop the closure of the Fairlie branch railway. He described the injuncture by the Retention Committee as a strange form of reciprocal gratitude after his efforts to arrange the offer of the memorial locomotive.

**TIMARU** — March 1, 1968:

Mr. S. R. Bennett a member of the Fairlie Flyer Committee said it appeared the Minister was not aware that there was no affiliation between his committee and the retention committee. Mr. Bennett said the Fairlie Flyer Committee is very grateful that the Minister has made the locomotive available at a reduced cost. It is not within our scope to make any comment or take any action regarding the closure of the line he said.

**TIMARU** — March 7, 1968:

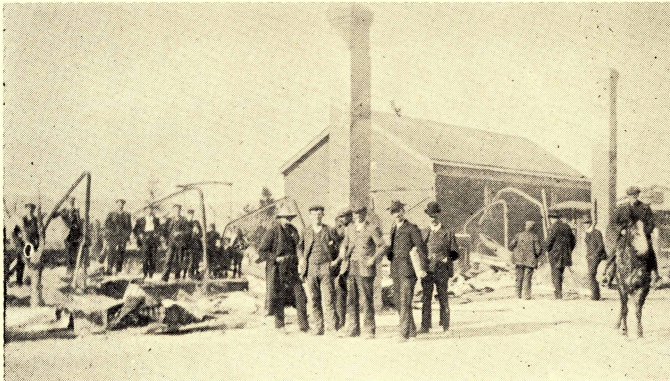
If the Levels County Council has control of the land, it would have no objection to siting the Fairlie Flyer Memorial at Pleasant Point. The County Clerk (Mr. G. B. Bird) told the Council yesterday that it at present had no control over the land on which it was proposed to site the locomotive. But the Council had written to the Commissioner of Crown Lands about the future of the land.



## PICTURES FROM THE PAST



H. Welsh's Blacksmith Shop, corner Princess Street and Mount Cook Road — Fairlie Creek, 1874.



### THE MORNING AFTER THE FIRE

The original Fairlie Station which housed also the Post and Telegraph Office was destroyed by fire early on Sunday morning, August 9, 1908. Note: The frames of the two carriages which were completely destroyed in the blaze.

Pleasant Point — A horse team have brought in a wagon load of grain for the Flyer, in the early 1900s.





3XC



Author-producer  
Bill Timmings — N.Z.B.C.

# Ballad of the

Listen and I'll tell you  
A railroad tale that's true,  
Of how the 'Fairlie Flyer'  
Ran down to Timaru.  
I'll tell you of the shearers  
And the tons of wool that came  
Along this line each season  
From the great Mackenzie Plain.

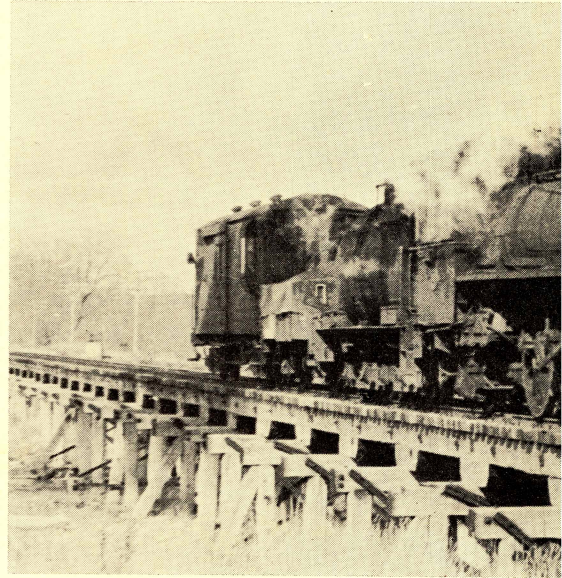
## *Chorus:*

So fireman stoke the engine,  
Steam down that railway track,  
This train that's leaving Fairlie  
Is never, never coming back.

There's stories in the country  
The locals love to tell,  
Of guards like Martin Fahey  
Who served the district well;  
For Martin loved the 'Flyer'  
And folks remember too  
How he even did their shopping  
Down the line at Timaru.

## *Chorus:*

So fireman stoke the engine,  
Steam down that railway track,  
This train that's leaving Fairlie  
Is never, never coming back.



I'll tell you how the children  
Went off to school each day,  
And climbed aboard the 'Flyer'  
At stops along the way  
And oh the many memories  
Those boys and girls recall,  
To them the 'Fairlie Flyer'  
Was the greatest train of all.

## *Chorus:*

So fireman stoke the engine,  
Steam down that railway track,  
This train that's leaving Fairlie  
Is never, never coming back.



Available on SPOTLIGHT E.P. Recd

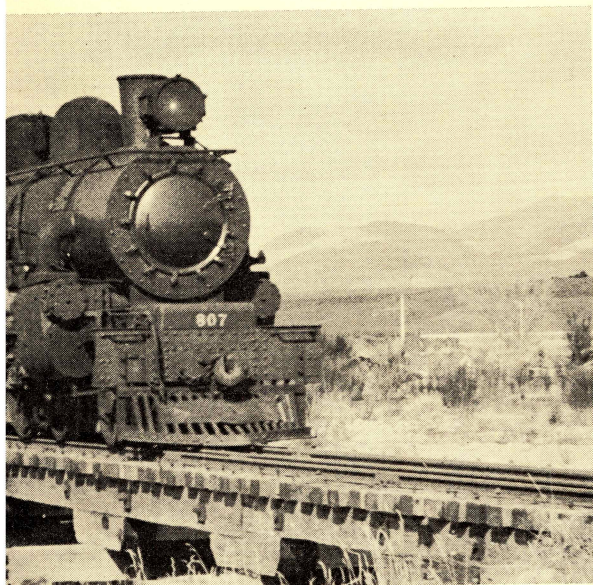


# Fairlie Flyer

Down the line to Albury  
Where shunting's done no more,  
And at Mrs. Gibson's tavern  
There's a welcome at the door.  
They tell of far-off summers  
That will never come again,  
When the goods shed at Albury  
Was filled with golden grain.



Popular Recording Artists,  
Picasso Trio — Timaru



## *Chorus:*

So fireman stoke the engine,  
Steam down that railway track,  
This train that's leaving Fairlie  
Is never, never coming back.

At Cave the station's silent,  
But the goods shed still resounds  
When the local boys are training  
As the tug-o-war comes round.  
When the last train passes  
They'll give a hearty cheer  
While over at the local  
Ted pours another beer.

## *Chorus:*

So fireman stoke the engine,  
Steam down that railway track,  
This train that's leaving Fairlie  
Is never, never coming back.

From Sherwood Downs to Clayton,  
Burke's Pass and Kimbell too,  
The boys that drive the transports  
Are the links with Timaru.  
And now the line is closing  
The country folk agree,  
That stories of the Fairlie train  
Will go down in history.

## *Chorus:*

So fireman stoke the engine,  
Steam down that railway track,  
This train that's leaving Fairlie  
Is never, never coming back.





# Recollections of a Railway

## Local Stories of the Fairlie Train

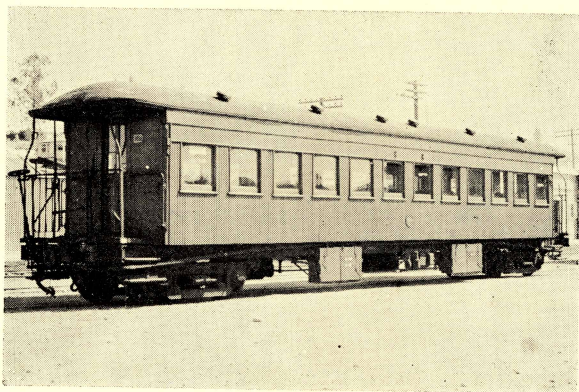
*By W. H. Timmings*

THE FAIRLIE train has had many drivers, but when Jerry Kane was on the foot-plate the flyer was nearly always on time. The partnership of Martin Fahey and Jerry Kane, has almost become a legend along the Fairlie Line. Jerry was a great sportsman, and during his time in Fairlie, he made his mark on the rugby and cricket fields as well as being a keen supporter of tug-of-war in the district. Jerry Kane died in 1952 after a very full life, 21 years of which he spent in faithful service on the Fairlie Flyer.

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One well-known driver on the Fairlie run was an ardent follower of horse racing — when on a morning during the last war, his young fireman remarked ‘I see Bengasi has fallen’. To his amazement, the driver replied ‘What race was it running in?’

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Carriages like this were used in the passenger days of the ‘flyer.’

One new years eve in the 1930's a young Fairlie man decided to court the ‘girl of his dreams’ in a deserted railway carriage in the Fairlie yard. Their entering of the carriage was noticed however by one of the railway officials who wasted no time in arranging a little surprise for the young couple. With the help of a well-known driver, an engine was quickly hooked on to the carriage — and for the next twenty minutes it was shunted backwards and forwards around the Fairlie railway yards. Eventually when the ‘shunting’ was over, the engine driver rushed along to the carriage to see the reactions of his rather shaken passengers. As he opened the door, the smile slipped quickly from his face when he found his own son inside.



During the last war one young soldier home on furlough, had very good reason to remember the 'Fairlie Flyer'. While searching for his return ticket to Fairlie, his wallet fell out of the open carriage window. As the train was not moving very fast at the time the soldier decided to jump off the carriage, pick up his wallet — and climbed back on to the passing guards van. However this military manoeuvre was doomed to be a failure, for instead of landing beside the rails — our young passenger complete with four bottles of 'Tim and Ru's best', in his battle dress tunic — found himself lying underneath the moving train, badly wounded with several facial injuries. His remarks years later were — 'I came through the war unscratched, but I had to get my "battle scars" on the old Fairlie Flyer. He was among the passengers on the last run though — just for memories.

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A well-known Fairlie business man, still delights in telling the story of how one morning years ago, a local grocer left Fairlie with a push-bike, the same time as the train, and both arrived at the Timaru station together. When his astonished listeners inquire how the grocer accomplished such a feat, they are told — 'It was easy — his bike was in the Guards van.'

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For many years one well-known personality at the Fairlie Railway Station, was 'Uncle Bert' — Mr Bert Andrews and his dog Nig. Bert's main job was to meet the train each night, and collect the mail bags for the Post Office. It was a job he always took very seriously, and pushing an old hand-cart, he became a familiar figure on the station platform, appearing regularly an hour and a half before the train was due.

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One hot summers evening in the 1930's, when the train pulled in to the Cave railway station, a thirsty passenger asked the guard if he'd have time to rush over to the local hotel for a drink. 'Yes there's plenty of time' replied the guard. 'Well don't go without me' said the passenger. With a smile the guard said — 'there's not much chance of that, the driver and the fireman are over there already.'

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The Fairlie show was always a big event for the local railway. A special two engine show train ran for many years. In the early days when the closed carriages were full, 'open carriages' were often used — these were just ordinary UB waggons, fitted with sides and tarpaulins over the top, and relying on a hurricane lantern for lighting. Many 'locals' along the Fairlie line, can still remember these memorable rides to the show, despite the smoke and flying cinders.

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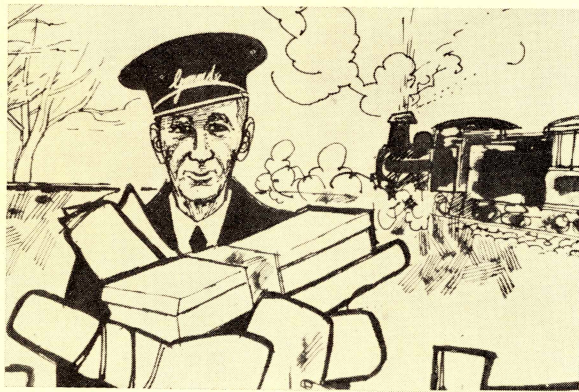
One night in the early 1940's the train pulled into Pleasant Point station, but before all the parcels and freight were unloaded, it moved off again. As the guards van rolled past a somewhat bewildered station master, Martin Fahey called out from the back 'We'll bring the rest of the freight down in the morning — the budget's being presented tonight, and Jerry wants to hear it.'

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On September 7, 1910 — one couple still living in Fairlie had good reason to rely on the Fairlie Flyer. It was their wedding day, and many of their guests were able to travel up by the Morning train, which arrived in Fairlie at 10 o'clock. Returning home, after the wedding on the 3 o'clock train. Even their church organist Kathleen Wheeler came up from Timaru this way.



For over seventeen years, no railway official made more impression than the guard Martin Fahey — Even today his name and deeds are remembered by all who travelled on the Fairlie Flyer. When he was farwelled from Fairlie, on the occasion of his transfer to Invercargill, Mr D. C. Kidd M.P., speaking at the function in the Aorangi Hall said — ‘I deem it a privilege



‘one of the best guards in the railway service’ — Martin Fahey.

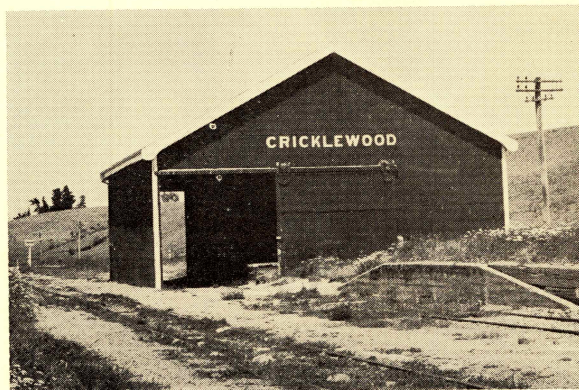
to take part in bidding farewell to one of the best guards in the railway service. No words of mine can express the gratitude the public feel for the kindness and consideration shown by Mr Fahey. He has a grand philosophy in life — the pleasure of helping others. He is looked upon not just as a guard, but as a good friend by all.’ Martin was a real worker, always busy — he never walked but ran. It was a common sight to see him jump off the engine with a mail bag — pick up another at a way-side station, and jump on the moving guards van, without stopping the train. On seeing him do this one day, a senior officer of the Railways Department asked — ‘Does this man run all the way from Timaru to Fairlie.’ Martin’s other service was to do the shopping for country folk along the line. With his list of ‘orders’ he became a familiar sight in Stafford Street, Timaru, as he rushed from shop to shop purchasing the various requirements.

Freight to Fairlie, a typical goods train just past ‘the Point.’ in the early 1960’s.





If the Fairlie Flyer has been the pack-horse of the district in the past — Railway facilities in those early days, also played their part in the social life of the country communities. Long before district schools and public halls were erected, the goods sheds at Cricklewood, Albury and Cave were used as dance halls. Railway tarpaulins screened off the open loading banks — flowers and greenery relieved the bareness of the buildings, and provided decorations. While under the flickering light of kerosene lamps, happy



From Goods Shed to Dance Hall.

couples danced away the night to the lilting music of a fiddle, piano or an accordion. More than half a life-time has past since those 'dancing years'. Today the singing fiddle and tuneful accordion have given way to the music of another generation. But still in the deserted old goods shed at Cricklewood, a single strand of fencing wire stretched high above the disused loading bank, is the only link with that grand pioneering era, when the railway was thriving — and many a rough goods shed was the dance hall, meeting place and community centre.

Some of the 142 'Fairlie Flyer' ex-pupils who attended a reunion in October 1966.







28in snow, 43° frost — Fairlie, July 11, 1903.

Through the cold of winter  
And heat of summer too,  
The Fairlie Flyer made it  
down the tracks to Timaru.

If transport has changed with the passing of time, the climate of the district has changed too. In the early days of the railway, winter storms seemed to be quite common. Many are the tales of the 'Flyers' adventures in the heavy snow falls. On July 11, 1903 for instance, there was 28 inches of snow at the Fairlie railway station, and a frost of 43 degrees. Fairlie was practically isolated, and conditions were so bad with ice and snow on the rails, that the evening train to Fairlie was unable to move past Cricklewood.

A J class locomotive with the railway gang  
clearing heavy snow early in the 1900s.

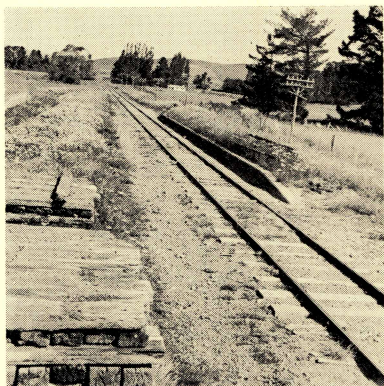




Because the roads also were blocked with snow and the hour was getting late, many passengers spent a cold uncomfortable night in the carriages, and set out for Fairlie on foot the next morning. It was some days before the line was cleared, so Cricklewood became the rail terminal. Even the mail was brought from Fairlie by pack horse to join the train there.

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As the passenger service disappeared from the Fairlie line, so did many of the buildings and facilities. Today at small way-side stations like Winscombe, Tengawai, Ma Waro and Waitawa, only an over grown loading bank gives mute evidence of once well used stopping places. The little station building at Cricklewood was shifted to Albury, where it now serves as a motor garage at the railway house. The once familiar large building at Albury station, now stands in a yard on the outskirts of Pleasant Point, serving as a bee keepers work room. The Cave station was moved to Washdyke, and today is almost completely obscured, as it forms part of a modern business premises. Two old goods sheds have already been disposed of, the building at Levels was sold some time ago, and the shed at Ma Waro was sold and recently pulled down by a local farmer.



Ma Waro, 1968.

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No account of the Fairlie train would be complete without mentioning the generations of children who travelled on the 'Flyer' each day to school. Their stories of those trips to Pleasant Point or Timaru would fill a book alone . . . there was never a dull moment from the beginning of the journey to the end. Whether they were laying gun powder down the centre of the carriage aisle and lighting it, or just chasing the girls, every prank invented had its moment on the Fairlie Flyer. In 1966 when the Fairlie train ex pupils held a reunion, one member in summing up those days said 'I have heard said that going to school was education . . . going to a museum was education . . . but boy, there was more education travelling on the 'Fairlie Flyer' from what I saw of it.'

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Over fifty years ago one regular caller at the Pleasant Point station was young Billy Wells. His job was to meet the morning train at twenty minutes past eight, collect his bundle of 'Timaru Heralds' and deliver them to all the residences in the township.

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The Fairlie train was known as a very slow train, but this wasn't always the case. When the driver known to the locals as 'Hell Fire Bill' was at the controls, the speeds were so great that it has been known for passengers to be sick with the rocking of the carriages.





A horse team and wagon brings a load of wool from Clayton Station to the railhead.

In the early days of the Fairlie branch line, wool was brought out of the Mackenzie to the rail head by bullock or horse waggons. One of the last horse team drivers was 'Night and Day Jimmy,' a familiar and well-known character in the district. The story goes that one hot day Jimmy arrived at the Fairlie railway yards with a load of wool. Before unloading his waggon he took his old coat off, and threw it down in the grass beside the loading bank. When the unloading was completed Jimmy jumped back up on to his waggon and drove away, completely forgetting about the ragged old coat lying in the grass. It was almost three weeks before Night and Day's waggon came rumbling into the railway yards. As the horses pulled up at the loading bank, Jimmy climbed down from his seat, and strolled over to the spot where he'd left his coat. Reaching down he picked up the well worn garmet, and putting his hands in one of the pockets, pulled out a roll — £75 worth of bank notes.

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Mr Alfred Pinkerton of Fairlie is one man who has vivid memories of busy days at the Fairlie Rail head. In his early years he did the droving and trucking of sheep at Fairlie, and he recalls that it was a familiar sight to see anything from fifty to sixty trucks of sheep leaving by train each morning. In fact the loads were so great that quite often because of the steep incline of the Winscombe Cutting, the engine used to take half the train down to Albury, and then go back for more trucks and the passengers. Alf in those days worked very long hours, droving sheep by day and loading them into trucks at night. Often after loading sheep all night, he would arrive home in time to feed his horse, have breakfast and then set out again on the road to Sherwood Downs for another mob.



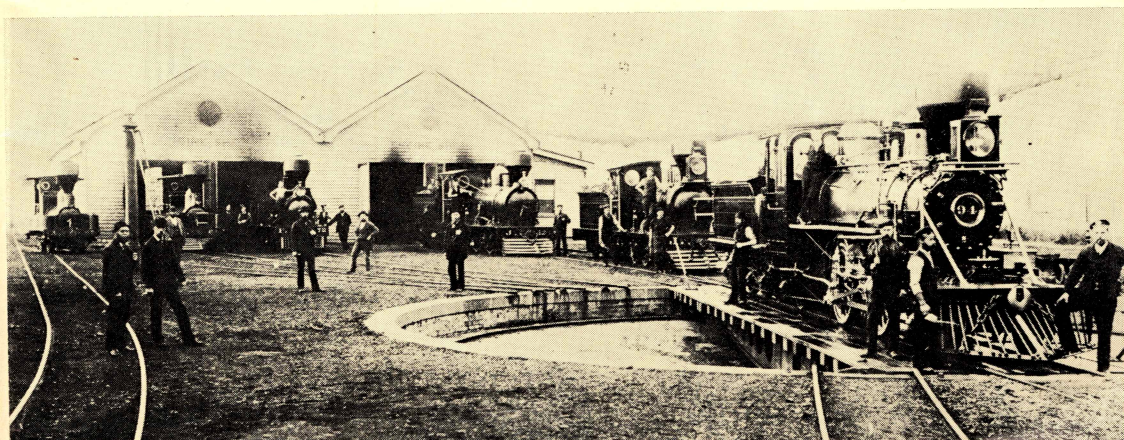


Three traction engines bring wool from the Mackenzie Country to the railhead at Fairlie — early 1900s.

When the bullock wagons and the horse teams gave up their long hauls to the rail head at Fairlie, the traction engines took over. It was not an uncommon sight in those days to see two or three of these large steam engines complete with wagons and galley huts, unloading wool from the Mackenzie at the Fairlie loading bank. One traction engine firm was Wigley and Thornley, but the carting business they established at Fairlie was only the beginning of an outstanding career for Rodolph Wigley. In the years that followed he went on to pioneer bus routes through the Mackenzie country and Central Otago . . . climb mountains . . . fly aeroplanes . . . and form in Timaru, The Mount Cook and Southern Lakes Tourist Company.

In the early days of the railway, the Station Masters acted also as Post Masters. Many old-timers can still recall collecting their mail from the railway station. Often waiting along with many others for the letters to be sorted, after the afternoon train had arrived.

Timaru Engine Sheds 1884 — From left the locomotives are: Two Class A (0-4.0T); an F; Two J's; and a K on turntable. The A was used mainly for shunting purposes, although one had drawn the first train into Waimate in 1877.





# Locomotive Development and the Fairlie Branch

*By S. R. Bennett*

IN THE 1870s the policy of the then Colonial Treasurer, Julius Vogel, provided for a network of light railways costing only £5000 per mile, a gauge of 3ft. 6in., with iron rails weighing only 40 lb per yard.

Small locomotives and rolling stock were contemplated and an average speed of 15 m.p.h. was considered adequate.

Foremost of the locomotives introduced in the early '70s was the F class, and the history of these locomotives has been described as the history of the N.Z. Railways.

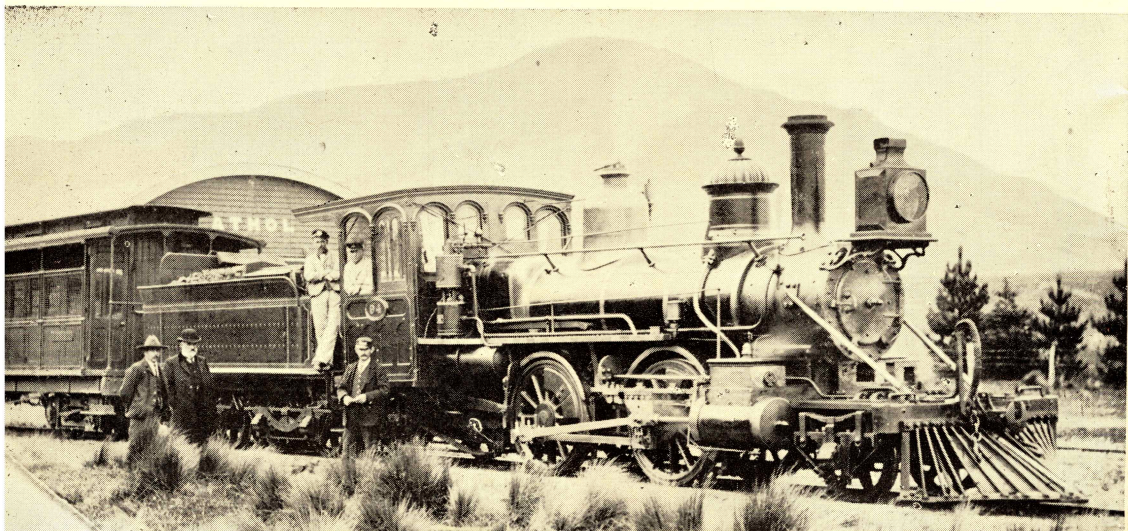
The F was a saddletank locomotive with six-coupled wheel arrangement, an 0-6-0T\*; 88 were introduced between 1872 and 1888. The F was a remarkable engine, and some are still in use at freezing works, 95 years after the class had first been brought into use.

It was F25 that opened the Albury branch in 1877, and the F became a regular sight on the Fairlie Line. It was an F too that accompanied a K on the opening of the line to Fairlie Creek in 1884.

The American K was a product of the Rogers Company, an excellent locomotive of 2-4-2 wheel arrangement, with an ornate wooden cab. These were the first American locomotives to be used in New Zealand and were introduced mainly for express work on the main lines. Eight were in use by 1878, and 'Washington' had the distinction of leading the first train into Fairlie Creek in 1884. By this time, the increasing weight of the main-line expresses had become too much for the K, and they too were relegated to branch lines, and like the F, became a familiar sight at Fairlie.

The long mixed trains of the time demanded efficient goods locomotives, which, because of the greater loads, needed smaller driving wheels than

The Rogers K introduced in 1878. Their 49½in diameter driving wheels gave speeds up to 50 m.p.h. though their listed speed was only 35 m.p.h.





those of the express engines, where speed with relatively light trains of carriages, was of prime importance. The class J was designed for freight service in Canterbury, the first six being introduced in 1874; with 26 more coming into use in the next nine years.

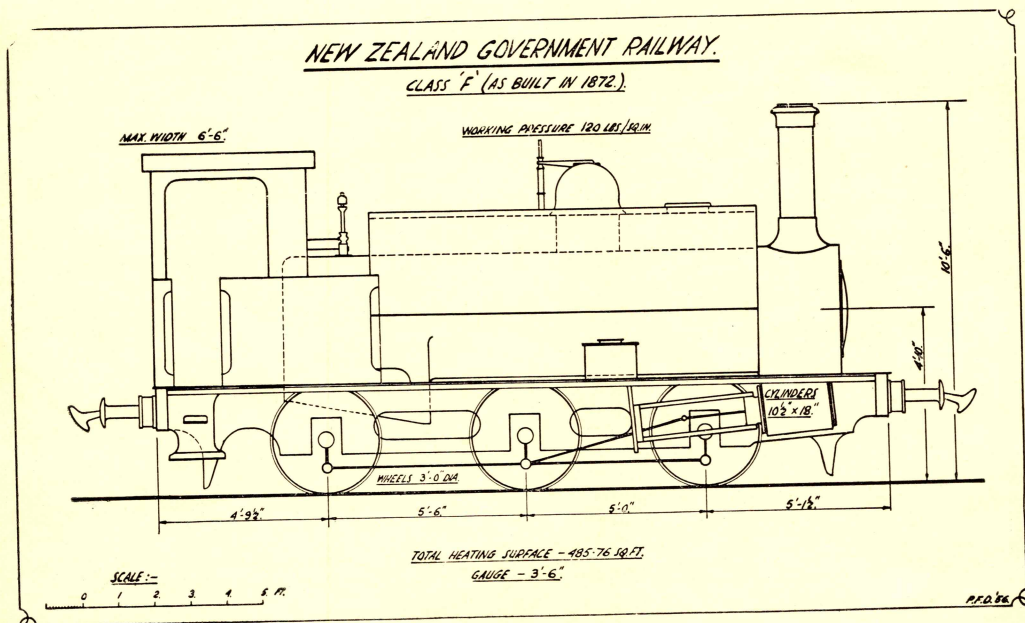
The J became established as the prime engine on freight trains. The wheel arrangement was 2-6-0, and their six wheeled tender was unique in N.Z. Railway history. The Fairlie Flyer was handled by these engines at the turn of the century, and up to about 1920, when they were gradually converted for shunting duties.

The South Island Main-line expresses from the mid-eighties were handled by class N locomotives. These were supplied by the Baldwin Company of U.S.A. and were tender locomotives of 2-6-2 wheel arrangements. They were in their turn superseded by the class U and Ub types.

There is no record of an N being in use on the Fairlie Flyer, but after the U and Ub classes had been replaced on the expresses, their use on the Fairlie Flyer became general.

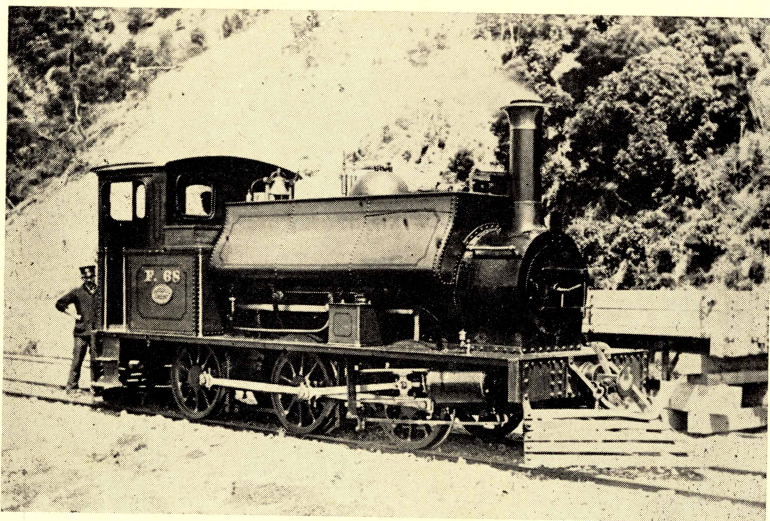
The class U had been introduced between 1894 and 1903 and it was a clean looking engine of wheel arrangement 4-6-0, being New Zealand designed and built. When replaced on the expresses by the Ub the U's took up branch line duties.

The Ub were easily the most popular 'ten wheelers' of the N.Z.R. Of the same wheel arrangement as the U, the Ub was introduced in 1898, a product of the Baldwin works of U.S.A. Two locomotives had been imported in 1901 as samples for use on a trial basis, when a further order of this type were being considered. Both were classed as Ub being of 4-6-0 type, one being supplied by the Brooks Works, the





other by the Richmond Factory, both of U.S.A. The Brooks Ub was numbered 17 and was regarded as the prime loco of its type in New Zealand. Consequently, Ub 17 became a firm favourite on the express runs, and when handled by capable drivers could even outshine the compound A when that type came into service on the main-line in 1906. This particular locomotive continued to handle the South Island expresses until the mid-twenties when it too, became relegated to secondary duties. It was probably the most celebrated engine to have seen service on the Fairlie branch.



The classic F. 20 tons of efficient locomotive power.

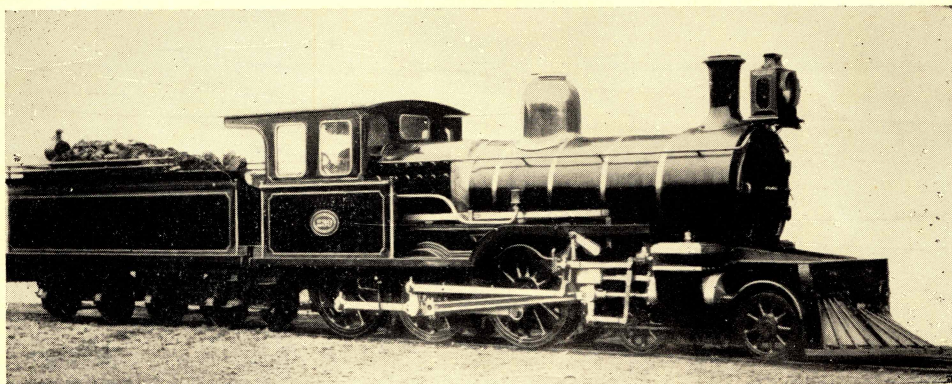
Early in this century, the 'Pacific' type locomotive appeared. The design of 4-6-2 had been supplied in 1901 as class Q by the Baldwin works and was the forerunner of the Pacific which was to become a world standard type. When the New Zealand-designed and built class A was introduced in 1906, this Pacific type became the backbone of the N.Z. Railways until the Ab class was built in 1915 to take over the heaviest duties.

The A's were to be found almost on every line—they handled the expresses, they handled the heavier goods and mixed trains, and even the Fairlie Flyer on occasions. They were a compound engine of four cylinders, and are still giving excellent service on the N.Z.R., though now altered to two cylinder propulsion.

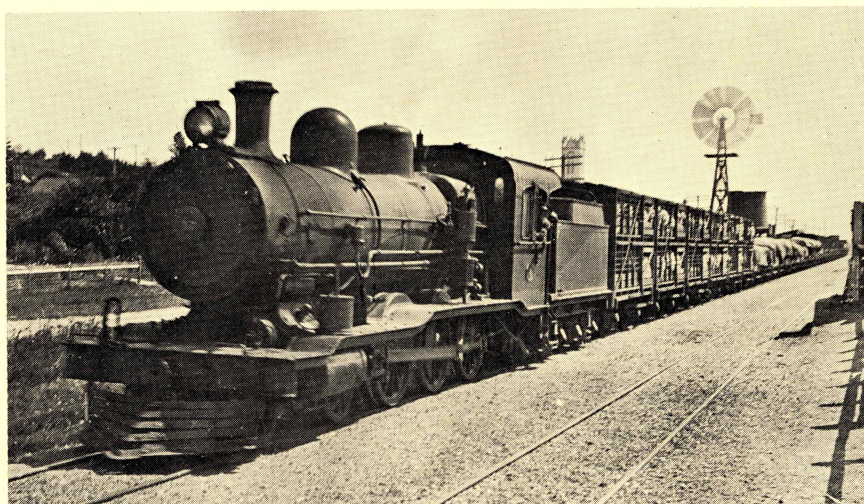
Probably the most popular engine in New Zealand Railways history was the Ab and until the advent of the heavier modern Ks and Js were the standard express and freight engines until the late 1930's. The Ab was a Pacific 4-6-2 and was described as 'the maid of all work'. The larger expresses used two of these fine engines and even in the 1960's, one could still find these locomotives at work handling the additional expresses at peak periods. They established their hold on the Fairlie branch from the late 1930's and have been used almost exclusively ever since, although the small loads handled on the branch in recent years have made their power superfluous.



# "U" TYPE LOCOMOTIVES USED ON THE FAIRLIE LINE

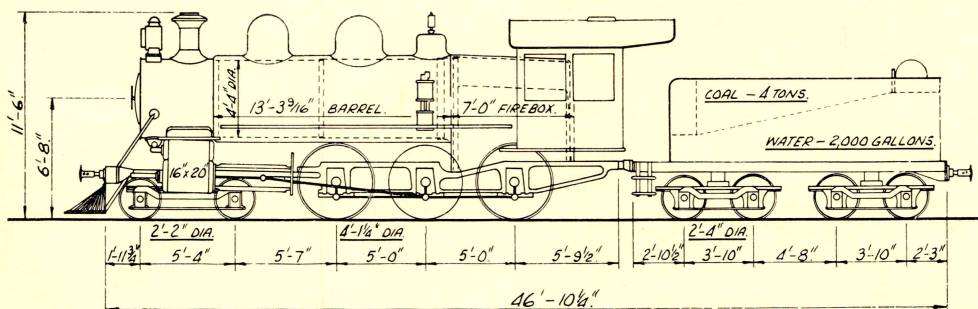


U 239 after completion at Addington in 1895.



The unique Ub 17 bringing the Flyer through Pleasant Point with a long load for Timaru, 1926.

MAX. WIDTH - 8'-0"



Class 'Ub' as built in 1898.



## LOCOMOTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND THE FAIRLIE BRANCH — *Continued.*

In 1940, we find Abs 610, 612, 689, 695, 697, 720, 723, 724, 780, 783, and 813, all in use between Timaru and Fairlie. Specials were run to Cave and Pleasant Point as required. Ab 718 was one engine which was used on the Fairlie Branch only occasionally but this locomotive had the unique distinction together with Ab 798 of pulling the 18 carriage Commemorative Fairlie Flyer on March 2, 1968.

The locomotives were stabled at Fairlie overnight and train 241 left Fairlie each morning, arriving at Timaru at 10.13 a.m. It left as train 248, at 4.02 p.m. and the service ran weekdays, Saturday included.

When the passenger service was discontinued in 1953, the trains were redesignated — 244 Timaru to Fairlie, 243 Fairlie to Timaru — and although originally a daily service, it was soon to become three times a week.

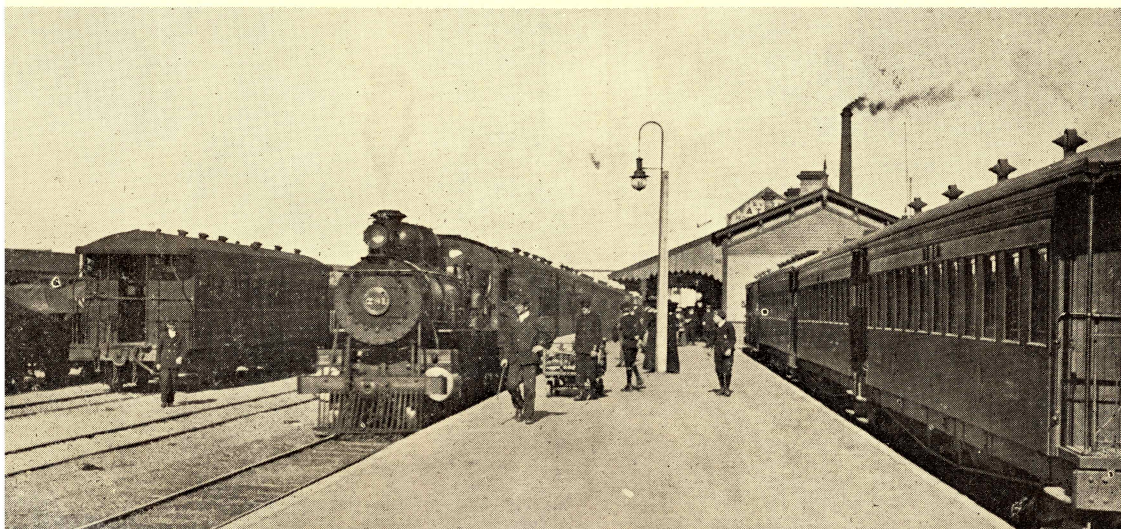
Ab's continued to be used, but they were stabled at Timaru. While the range of numbers in use on the branch by then was rather lower, we find Ab's 613, 691, 692, 776, 780, 788, 791 and 792, making frequent runs to Fairlie in 1953.

By this time, too, the Ja's were in command of the South Island expresses, and the Ab had at last been relegated to secondary duties. With the relatively light track on the Fairlie branch, it is certain that the Ab must be the largest and most powerful locomotive to be seen on this line.

Though the diesel-electric has already ousted the steam locomotive in the North Island, and much of the South, it has not worked the Fairlie branch, and this is one line that has remained truly faithful to steam.

\* In quoting locomotive types, the usual practice is to quote the wheel arrangement commencing from the boiler end of the engine. The idlers are quoted first, the total number of driving wheels, next, and finally the trailing wheels (if any). The tender is ignored, but if a tank engine is quoted, the letter T is placed after the figures. Tank engines have their bunkers incorporated with the engine, i.e. they do not have a tender.

The northbound express arrives at Timaru in the early 1900s drawn by Ub 281. On the right, in the 'dock' is the Fairlie Flyer — 3 carriages and guards van being made ready for the afternoon train to Fairlie.





# "One for the Road"

*By W. H. Timmings*

IN THE PAST, as at the present time in small communities along the Fairlie Road — the local Hotels served as meeting places or community centres. Over their bars can still be heard the gossip of the district, anything from the retention of the Fairlie Railway, to present farming conditions. A far cry from the simple accommodation houses of the past, these old 'locals' have seen many changes with the passing of time.

Today stainless steel fittings and rich carpeted lounges, have replaced the familiar furnishings of pioneer days. But the same friendly hospitality is still to be found along the Fairlie line.

C. A. Proctor's — PLEASANT POINT HOTEL, once reflected the influence of the 'Fairlie Flyer' — for it was called the Railway Hotel. At the present time Fairlie has two 'Locals' — Ian McAteer's GLADSTONE GRAND, with its renowned 'Mackenzie Lounge and Trophy Room. And Jack O'Connor's newly renovated FAIRLIE HOTEL. Both these 'Pubs' have been closely linked with the progress of the railway, and the history of the settlement.

But no true story of the 'Point Road' or the 'Fairlie Flyer' would be complete, without mentioning Mrs. Gibson of Albury, and Ted Finnie of Cave — two popular veteran publicans of South Canterbury. Mrs Gibson first came to the district in 1932, with her husband and young family, to

take over the lease of the Hotel at Cave. The family had only been at Cave a short while though, when Mr Gibson died — leaving his young wife to care for the children, and manage the affairs of the Hotel as well. Those grim depression years were hard times for the small country Hotel, but by hard work and long hours Mrs Gibson made a success of it. One of her private ambitions in those days was to buy a small Hotel of her own. In 1936 the opportunity came her way — the RAILWAY HOTEL at Albury became vacant, and Mrs Gibson and the girls moved up there to take over the licence.

The story of the next 32 years is part of the history of the district — for no publican in South Canterbury is held in higher esteem than this little lady at Albury. The locals affectionately call her 'Mum,' — her gracious unassuming way and genuine interest in the sorrows and joys of the people around her, have won for Mrs Gibson an honoured place in the hearts of all who know her.



MRS GIBSON — 'Many young cadets from the railway used to stay in our Hotel.'





TED FINNIE — 'I once used to get all my beer supplies on the Fairlie Flyer'.

Like Albury the history of the Hotel at Cave goes back almost before the beginnings of the Railway. The present licensee Ted Finnie took over on March 7, 1945. After 23 years of faithful service to the settlement and surrounding farming community, Ted has become one of the best known publicans along the Fairlie Road. Perhaps its his quiet manner, the friendliness of the locals, or the quaint architecture of the old building, but those who visit the CAVE ARMS today will tell you that this little 'Pub' has an atmosphere all of its own. Around its small oval bar in the evening is to be found real country hospitality. When John plays his pipes, or 'Scotty' from Cannington comes over with his piano accordion, the bar-room echoes with the lilting strains of familiar tunes old and new.

But the days of the old CAVE ARMS are numbered, when Ted opens his new CAVE INN, this link with the pioneering past, like the usefulness of the 'Fairlie Flyer' will be over. Even although Hotel styles may change to meet modern conditions, the rural tranquility of this little settlement hasn't changed much from the time when the railway was new.

Once a busy way-side station, Cave today would be nothing with out its friendly people — Ted Finnie — and the new CAVE INN.

#### A LINK WITH THE PIONEERS — THE CAVE ARMS in the early days of the railway.

The original hotel was a mile down the road from the present township.







FAIRLIE HOTEL — Early 1900s.

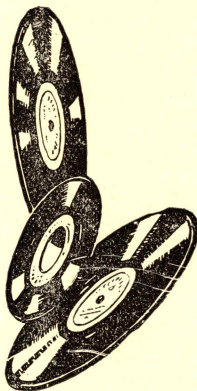
The sound of horses hooves outside the bar-room doors at Albury — Cave — Pleasant Point and Fairlie, have long since given way to the roar of modern traffic. Soon the rumble of iron wheels on steel tracks, and the wail of a distant whistle will also be a thing of the past. But perhaps in one of these Hotels in another generation, someone over a glass of ale, will recall with pride that his Grandfather was a passenger on the final 'Fairlie Flyer' — Then a host of memories of this train, and those who travelled on it, will come slowly drifting back.

FAIRLIE — The town that grew around the railhead.





# Record of a Railway



Jim Sullivan records the 'Fairlie Flyer' for 'Sounds of South Canterbury.'

WHEN IN JUNE 1967, Bill Timmings and Jim Sullivan of 3ZC Timaru, set out to produce a Radio programme on the 36-mile Fairlie branch line, the fascinating stories they were told about it prompted Bill (who wrote the words for 'Ballad of The Waitaki') to compose the lyrics for a song. Teamed with a rhythmic banjo, guitar and voice arrangement by South Canterbury's Picasso Trio — a brand new folk-song was born — '*The Fairlie Flyer*.'

But to make this work all the more authentic, the actual sounds of Ab 754 and 807 — pulling the Fairlie Train, were added at the beginning and finale of the song — preserving for ever echos of 'The Fairlie Flyer' in all its glory.

Houghton Hughes Enterprises have pleasure in releasing the gramophone record 'Sounds of South Canterbury' — featuring the two songs 'The Fairlie Flyer' and 'Ballad of the Waitaki' — plus sound memories of the Fairlie train recalled by those who worked and travelled on it.

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'SOUNDS OF SOUTH CANTERBURY'

A 'SPOTLIGHT' extended play record

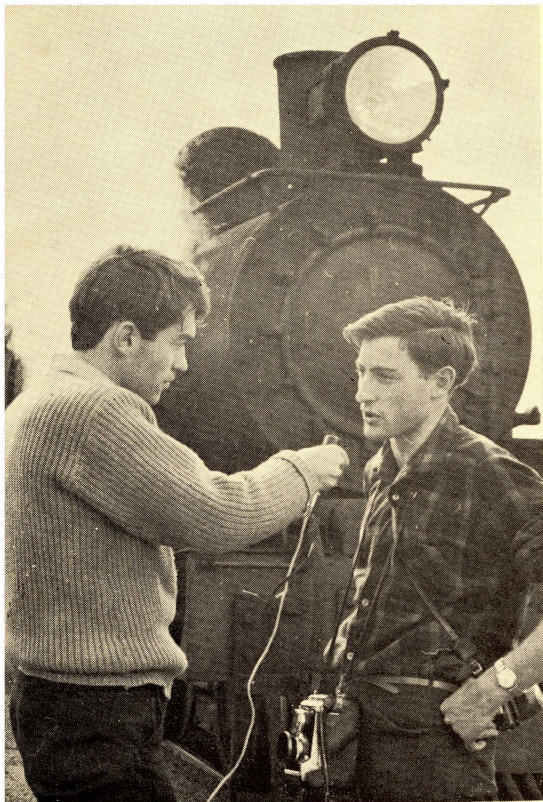
Priced at \$1.50

is available from:

THE FAIRLIE FLYER COMMITTEE,

P.O. BOX 354, TIMARU





# The Fairlie Flyer on Radio and Television

Jim Sullivan of 3ZC interviews  
a railway enthusiast at Fairlie.

The 'Fairlie Flyer' featured in the series 'Looking at New Zealand' on all New Zealand TV Channels. And also a radio documentary 'Recollections Of A Railway' from 3ZC Timaru on March 3, 1968.

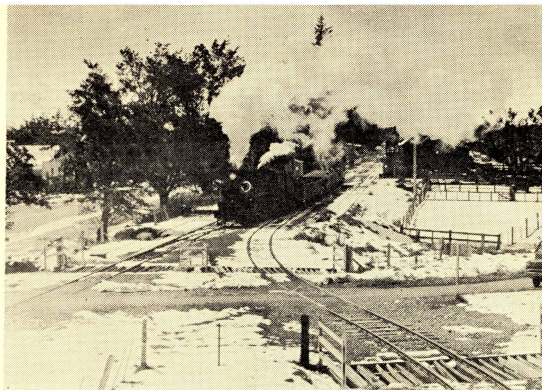
C.H.T.V.-3 camera crew in helicopter film the 'Flyer' from the air.





# Through the cold of Winter

*W. H. Timmings*



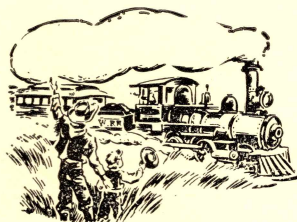
The 'Flyer' leaves behind its last snow storm — Fairlie, November 1967.

FOR MANY their last memories of the Fairlie Flyer will be thoughts of a sooty black Ab locomotive pulling one or two trucks through a sun-drenched country side, surrounded by rich pasture lands and slow running rivers. Today this sentimental picture may be true, but in the past the Fairlie Flyer has had its share of battles against the elements. In the big snow storm of July 1903, Newspaper reports at the time stated — 'It was rumoured that the outward bound Fairlie Train on Saturday evening got no further than 'The Cave'. The Monday train due at 10.30 a.m. had not arrived at 11 o'clock, so a trolley was sent out to Washdyke to see if the line was clear.'

If snow has been the reason for delays in the timetable of the 'Flyer' it has also provided other problems for the Railway Department. Another Newspaper item in 1903 tells of a special work train which left Timaru to go to the relief of a 'blocked' engine at Fairlie — all working parts on this loco were coated thickly with ice and snow, and thirty men working with picks and shovels took half an hour to free it.

When the line was eventually cleared, the Timaru Herald ended its reports of the 1903 snow storm, with these words — 'The evening train from Fairlie yesterday arrived at due time — and it may be presumed now that all the difficulties of the railway service are over — until the next heavy snowfall occurs.'

The Fairlie Railway Yards during the big snow storm of July 1903.





## Big Crowds Celebrate Fairlie Flyer's Commemorative Run to Mackenzie

Train whistles blared defiantly as the old Fairlie Flyer steamed slowly into the new Timaru Railway Station on Saturday evening. The Flyer, its 84-year life history, had ended its last official journey.

More than 1000 people made the commemorative trip over the 36-mile Washdyke to Fairlie branch line. As many more followed the festivities by road.

An application for an injunction against the Minister of Railways (Mr J. B. Gordon) to stop the closure of the line did not affect the sentimental trip. The final run of the Fairlie Flyer made a day that the inland residents and passengers will long remember.

The application, an effort by the Fairlie Railway Retention Committee to save the line, will be heard in the Supreme Court, Dunedin, at 10 a.m. today.

From early Saturday morning the Timaru Railway Station was a hive of activity. Eighteen passengers who made the journey in period costumes added an historical atmosphere.

Others getting on at stops along the line were dressed in gym frocks, no doubt remembering the days when they travelled to and from school on the train.

The Flyer left at 9.15 a.m. after its passengers had been wished a pleasant and memorable trip by the stationmaster (Mr T. W. Ambler).

### Crowds All Way

Crowds at the Strathallan Street crossing were an indication of what was to come. All along the way, passers-by, motorists, white-coated workers and even a group of racing cyclists stopped near the railway line, to wave as the train passed.

A long line of cars matched the Flyer's varying pace. Light

aeroplanes manoeuvred skilfully overhead.

The Flyer reached Pleasant Point at 9.50 a.m. and the 200 passengers who climbed aboard found only one 56-seat carriage for them. But as the journey continued more seats became vacant and few passengers had to stand for any length of time.

The Pleasant Point and District Highland Pipe Band, travelling by bus, piped the train in at Albury and played later at Fairlie, Cave, and Pleasant Point.

Items by the 16-strong Arowhenua Maori School haka group and a much-awaited Maori hangi, prepared under the direction of Mr T. M. Reuben, were highlights of an enthusiastic Albury welcome.

Leaving Albury at 11.30 a.m., the Flyer began a slow seven-mile haul up to the Winscombe Cutting. The two locomotives (AB 718 and AB 798) laboured as they dragged their 500-ton load slowly to the peak of a 930-foot climb from Timaru.

Five minutes past 12 saw the Flyer pull into Fairlie. The main road had been closed for the occasion and passengers spilled out to enjoy lunch and refreshments.

The first of four concerts was given from the tray of a Mackenzie County Council truck after lunch at Fairlie. Artists featured were Joan and Allan Linton, from Timaru (songs); the Bambinos, a Fairlie vocal quartet; Jack Denley and Peter McLachlan (vocal and





THE COMMEMORATIVE 'FAIRLIE FLYER' ARRIVES AT WASHDYKE  
FOR THE LAST TIME — MARCH 2, 1968.



instrumental); Peter Sanderson, Albury (piano accordion); and the Picasso Trio (songs.) The compere was John McMillan.

## Ballad

It was at this concert that the Picasso Trio sang for the first time the "Ballad of the Fairlie Flyer," written by the Timaru radio personality Bill Timmings. Train whistles provided a fitting background as the trio ended their ballad.

Children of the Mackenzie were given a special ride to Albury and back while adults lunched at Fairlie. The single-engine excursion train, its eight carriages cramped with happy youngsters, was piped back into the station.

The Flyer did not leave Fairlie until 3.20 p.m. because of a spilt brake pipe on one carriage.

An hour late, the Fairlie Flyer, its leading engine now gaily decorated, took off for Albury. The train was escorted out of the Fairlie Railway Station by the combined Pleasant Point and Mackenzie Highland Pipe Bands.

At what seemed a fast 30 miles an hour — the speed restriction for all trains on the line — the train pounded towards Albury. A brief refreshment stop, a second concert and the train was away again, this time headed for Cave. The highlight stop of the afternoon.

At Cave, a middleweight tug-of-war contest was held for the Fairlie Flyer Challenge Shield. Pleasant Point, led by B. Casey, beat the local team to become the first holders. The shield given by the Cave district, will be competed for annually.

After a third concert and afternoon tea the Flyer left Cave at 5.15 p.m. for its last major stop before Timaru — Pleasant Point.

Eleven vintage cars and motor bikes, of the South Canterbury Vintage Car Club paraded through the main street. Then the Flyer racing against time, left at 5.45 p.m.

The green flag was waved for the last time on the line after a brief stop at Washdyke.

Her whistles tooting for a solid minute (residents throughout the city commented on the noise), the Fairlie Flyer lumbered into the

Timaru Railway Station just on 6.30 p.m.

The day was a great success. The weather was perfect, temperatures in all districts being in the high seventies. Photographers had a field day and passengers, young and old alike — 1028 on the return count — appeared to enjoy the excursion fully. Hotels along the line may possibly never again experience such thriving business.

## Early Passengers

Possibly the earliest passenger to make the final sentimental trip was Mrs A. Munro, 89 of Pleasant Point.

Mrs Munro recalled that she had travelled on the train first when she was nine years old — about four years after the line had been opened in 1884, when she was given her first train ride by Mrs George Lowe, the wife of a sheep farm manager at Cave.

"I have always remembered that day," said Mrs Munro. "We went for a day in town and travelled from Cave to Timaru and back."

Mrs Munro said that she had had to wait five years for her next trip.

Mrs Munro also travelled on the Flyer during her honeymoon 63 years ago — a journey she remembers because on that occasion she fell between two stationary carriages.

"I went to see where my husband was, misjudged the rail and fell," she said.

"Two policemen picked me up, but I was not hurt. All I wanted was to get back into the carriage before my husband saw me."

Mrs Munro's sister, Mrs D. E. C. Hall, who now lives in Timaru, also made the final trip. Mrs Hall worked at the Cave Post Office for five years from 1920, and it was part of her daily duty to put the mail on the train.

Mr A. Deane, of Timaru, was another early passenger to make the trip. Formerly a road contractor, Mr Deane travelled on the train when he first came into the Mackenzie district about 1909.

On the death of "Night and Day Jimmy" — a familiar horse team driver in the days when wool was



carried by wagons out of the Mackenzie to the railhead—Mr Deane took over his team. However, it was about this time (1921) that lorries started and put him out of his job.

Mr Deane, who used to travel on the train about once a month, said that he was sorry to see it go. "This trip has brought back a lot of old memories," he said.

### 'Exceeded Expectations'

"The trip has exceeded all expectations," said the Mayor of Timaru (Mr D. R. Dowell) as the train neared Timaru on the return journey.

"I was most impressed with the picnic atmosphere on the train," he said, "and with the thousand people travelling on it, there were no incidents and everybody enjoyed themselves.

"In my opinion, the trip is something that South Canterbury will unfortunately never see again.

"When I say unfortunately," said Mr Dowell, "I mean the carnival spirit and behaviour of those people who travelled in the train was something that one could only take part in to appreciate.

"It is the end of an era and indeed a fitting end," said Mr Dowell. "As Mayor of Timaru, I was most happy to take part in my official capacity.

"I would say that the trip was a unique occurrence, which those

who have taken part in will remember for many years to come.

"My sincere congratulations go to the organisers, who left nothing to be desired in the organisation of this memorable day," said Mr Dowell.

"It was a very sentimental trip for me," said the chairman of the Timaru section of the Fairlie Flyer Committee (Mr A. Sullivan).

"For 11 years I went to school on this train and I have found only one other on the trip today who went to school on the train for a longer period. She is Miss Margaret Winter, of Pleasant Point, who travelled to school via the Flyer for 11½ years.

"It is a fantastic farewell," said Mr Sullivan.

A crew of seven guided the Flyer on her last official trip. The engine drivers were Messrs G. Turner and R. J. Challis, the firemen Messrs J. Evans and L. Hill, and the guards Messrs W. B. Cornelius, D. Lynch, and M. S. Kennedy (assistant).

Mr Challis said that when he had been a fireman on trains taking troops for the military camp at Balmoral, trains with up to 10 carriages had travelled the line.

"But none of the troop trains was as big as this," said Mr Challis. The excursion train, with its 18 carriages, was the biggest he had known on the Fairlie branch line.

## HAVE YOU HEARD THE 'SOUNDS OF SOUTH CANTERBURY' 'SOUNDS OF SOUTH CANTERBURY'

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## FAREWELL TO FAIRLIE



Recollections of a railway  
When its life is done,  
Thoughts of an empty train  
Steaming towards the sun,  
Westward now the line is quiet  
But hear the locals say,  
The 2nd of March '68  
Was the 'Flyers' greatest day.





**1884 — 1968**